

L Number	Hits	Search Text	DB	Time stamp
-	149	(379/88.17).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 14:06
-	47	((379/88.17).CCLS.) and web	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 14:07
-	43	((379/88.17).CCLS.) and web) and address	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 14:34
-	22	((379/88.17).CCLS.) and web) and address) and (recognition or IVR)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:28
-	148	(379/88.21).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:14
-	5	((379/88.21).CCLS.) and web	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:19
-	131	(379/88.2).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:19
-	3	((379/88.2).CCLS.) and web	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:20
-	75	(379/88.14).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:25
-	10	((379/88.14).CCLS.) and web	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:20
-	99	(379/88.02).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:41
-	5	((379/88.02).CCLS.) and web	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:26
-	38	((379/88.02).CCLS.) and (directory or (address or phone) adj book))	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:28
-	38	((379/88.02).CCLS.) and (directory or (address or phone) adj book))) and (recognition or IVR)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:28
-	54	(379/88.08).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:41
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-	81	(379/88.04).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:43

-	4	((379/88.04).CCLS.) and web	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:41
-	847	(379/88.01).CCLS.	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/10 15:57
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-	0	(phone adj number) and name and (speech adj to adj text)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/11 14:08
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-	152	((phone adj number) and name and ((voice adj recognition) or IVR)) and address) and web) and response	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/11 14:27
-	91	((phone adj number) and name and ((voice adj recognition) or IVR)) and address) and web) and (voice adj response)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/11 14:27
-	62	train adj ((speech or voice) adj recognition)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/11 15:41
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-	259	(directory and intranet) and textual	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/11 15:42

-	86	((directory and intranet) and textual) and recognition	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/11 15:42
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-	8	((379/88.01).CCLS.) and (match adj name)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/12 15:16
-	0	((379/88.01).CCLS.) and (match adj name)) and (call adj verify)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	2002/09/12 15:16



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(12) **United States Patent**
Shaffer et al.

(10) Patent No.: **US 6,381,324 B1**
(45) Date of Patent: ***Apr. 30, 2002**

(54) **ONE NUMBER, INTELLIGENT CALL PROCESSING SYSTEM**

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Primary Examiner—Creighton Smith

(74) Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear, LLP

(75) Inventors: **James D. Shaffer, Rancho Santa Fe, CA (US); George G. Moore, Great Falls, VA (US)**

(73) Assignee: **Murex Securities, Ltd., Douglas (GB)**

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/690,661**

(22) Filed: **Oct. 17, 2000**

Related U.S. Application Data

- (63) Continuation of application No. 09/477,181, filed on Jan. 4, 2000, now Pat. No. 6,185,290, which is a continuation of application No. 09/211,475, filed on Dec. 14, 1998, now Pat. No. 6,058,179, which is a continuation of application No. 08/748,192, filed on Nov. 12, 1996, now Pat. No. 5,901,214
- (60) Provisional application No. 60/019,526, filed on Jun. 6, 1996.

- (51) Int. Cl.⁷ **H04M 3/42**
- (52) U.S. Cl. **379/211.02; 379/207.12; 379/207.14; 379/207.15; 379/219; 379/223; 379/88.01; 379/88.13; 704/270.1**
- (58) Field of Search **379/201, 127, 379/207, 211, 219, 220, 221, 67, 90.01, 93.24, 142, 265, 113, 112, 88.01, 88.13, 223**

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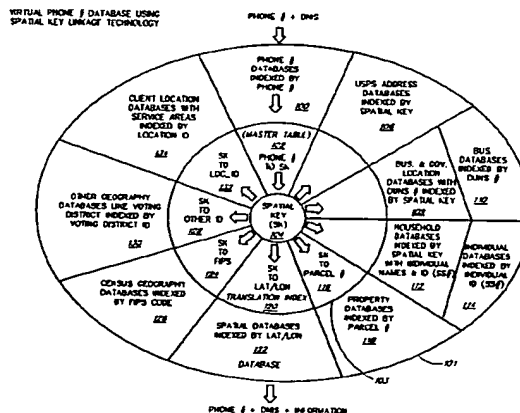
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ABSTRACT

A one number, multi-application, intelligent call processing system provides service benefits to a caller, a servicing location and/or a vanity number advertiser during a call, parallel to the call and/or post call in an integrated common architecture. To provide these benefits, the system utilizes Voice Response Unit (VRU) technology in conjunction with the national telecommunications network connected via Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) to a virtual telephone number database containing a nation-wide master list of telephone numbers with thousands of attribute data items associated by Spatial Key linkage to each telephone number. The process of the invention is initiated by a caller dialing a selected telephone number to request information and/or services. Based on the number dialed, a caller or network provided 10 digit telephone number and VRU prompted for and received caller input, the system retrieves the application requested data from the virtual telephone number database. The application uses the retrieved information to direct the VRU to speak selected retrieved information to the caller that is desired by the caller or needs to be verified by the caller, to automatically connect the caller with a servicing location whose service area can be geographically defined as any size or shape and encompasses the caller provided telephone number's location, and/or to store portions of the received and retrieved information for later use.

165 Claims, 28 Drawing Sheets



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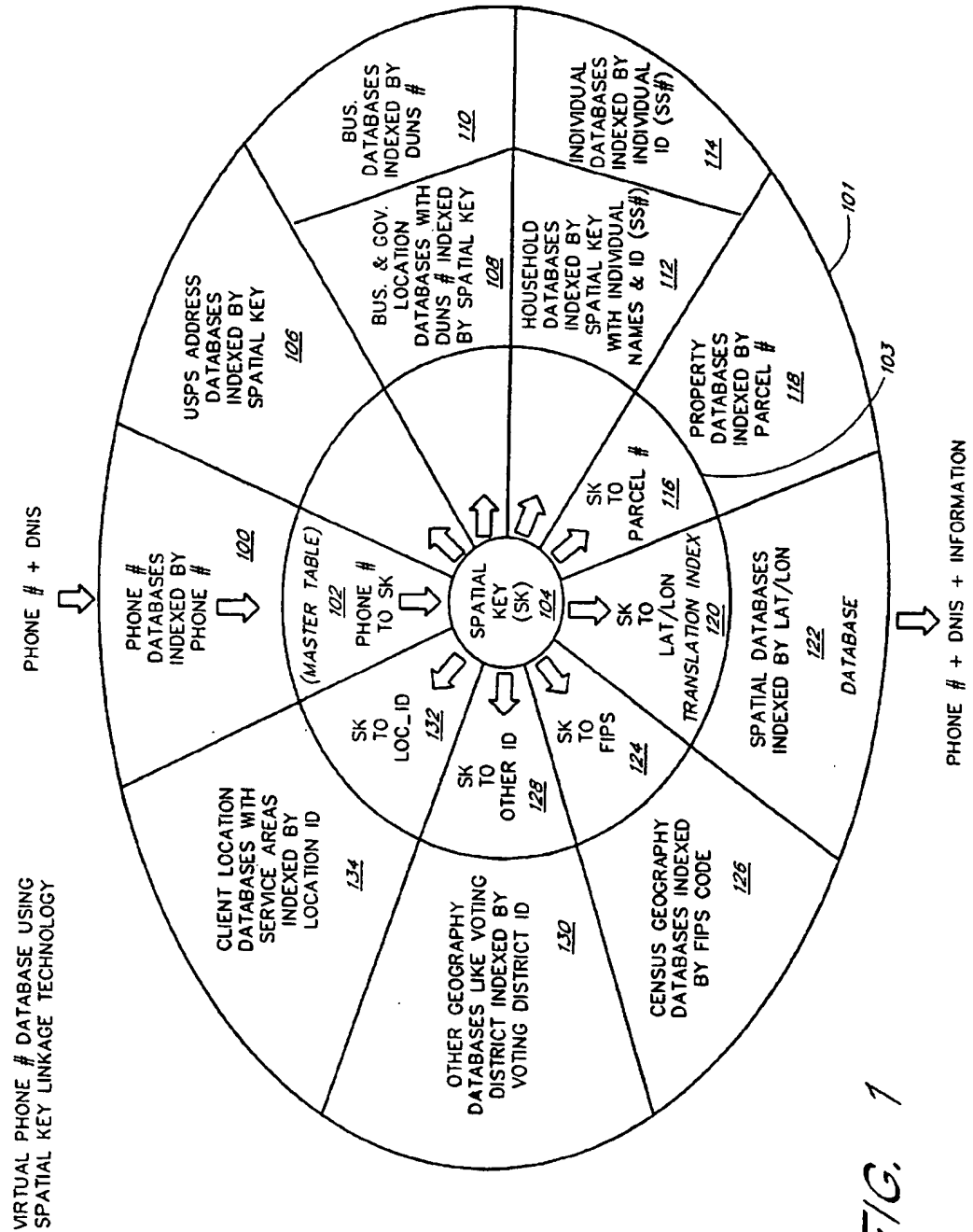
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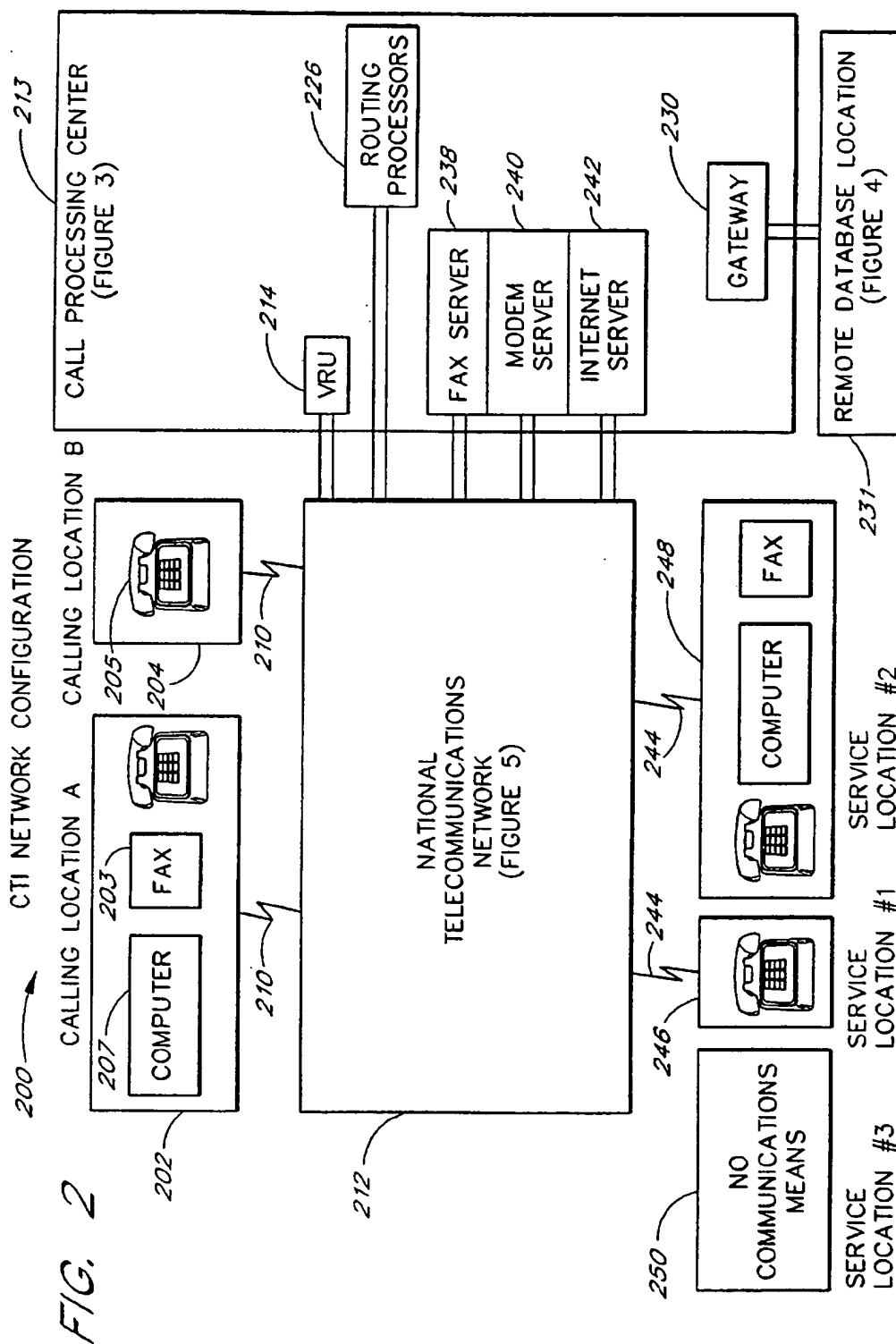
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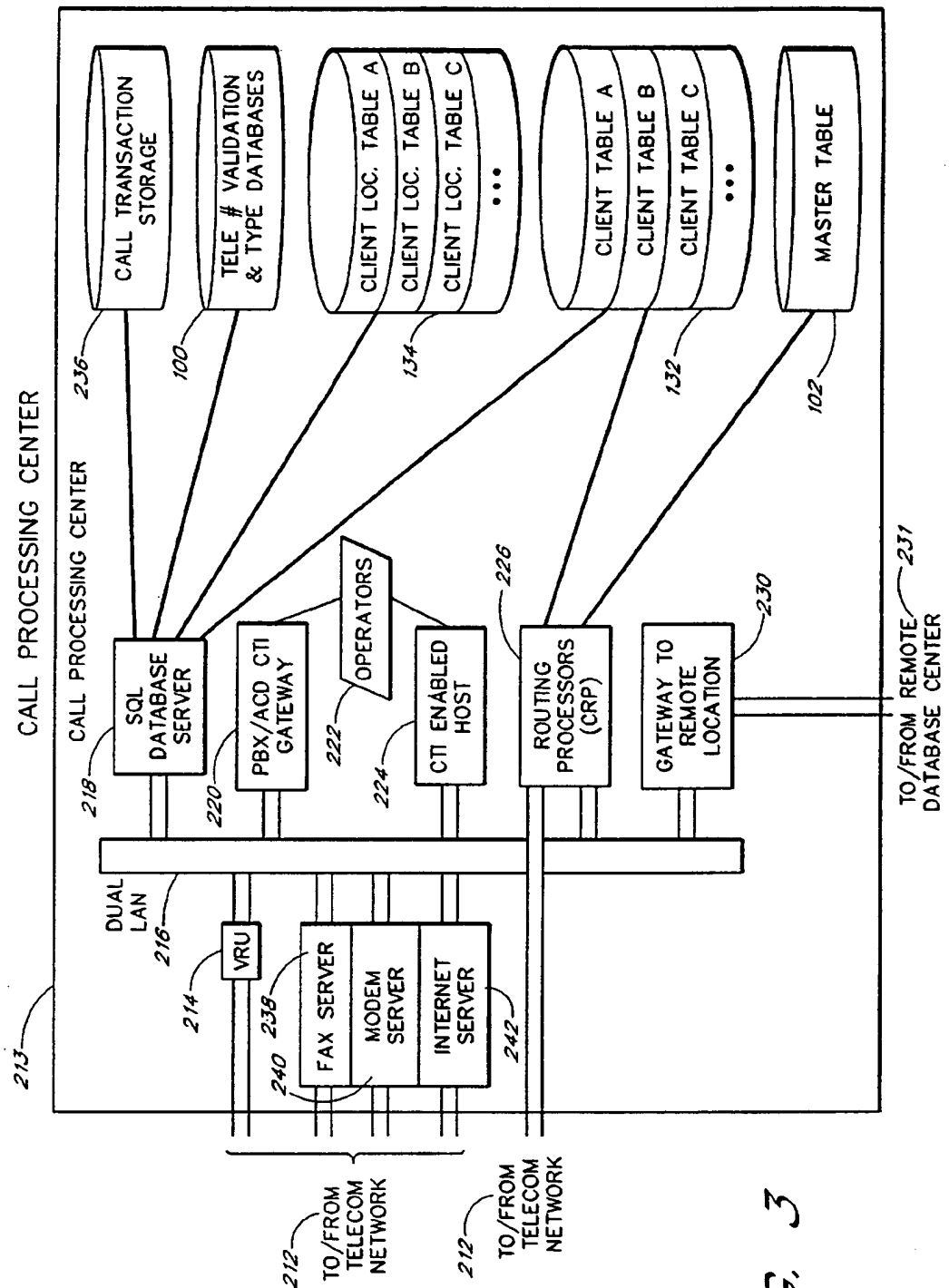


FIG. 3

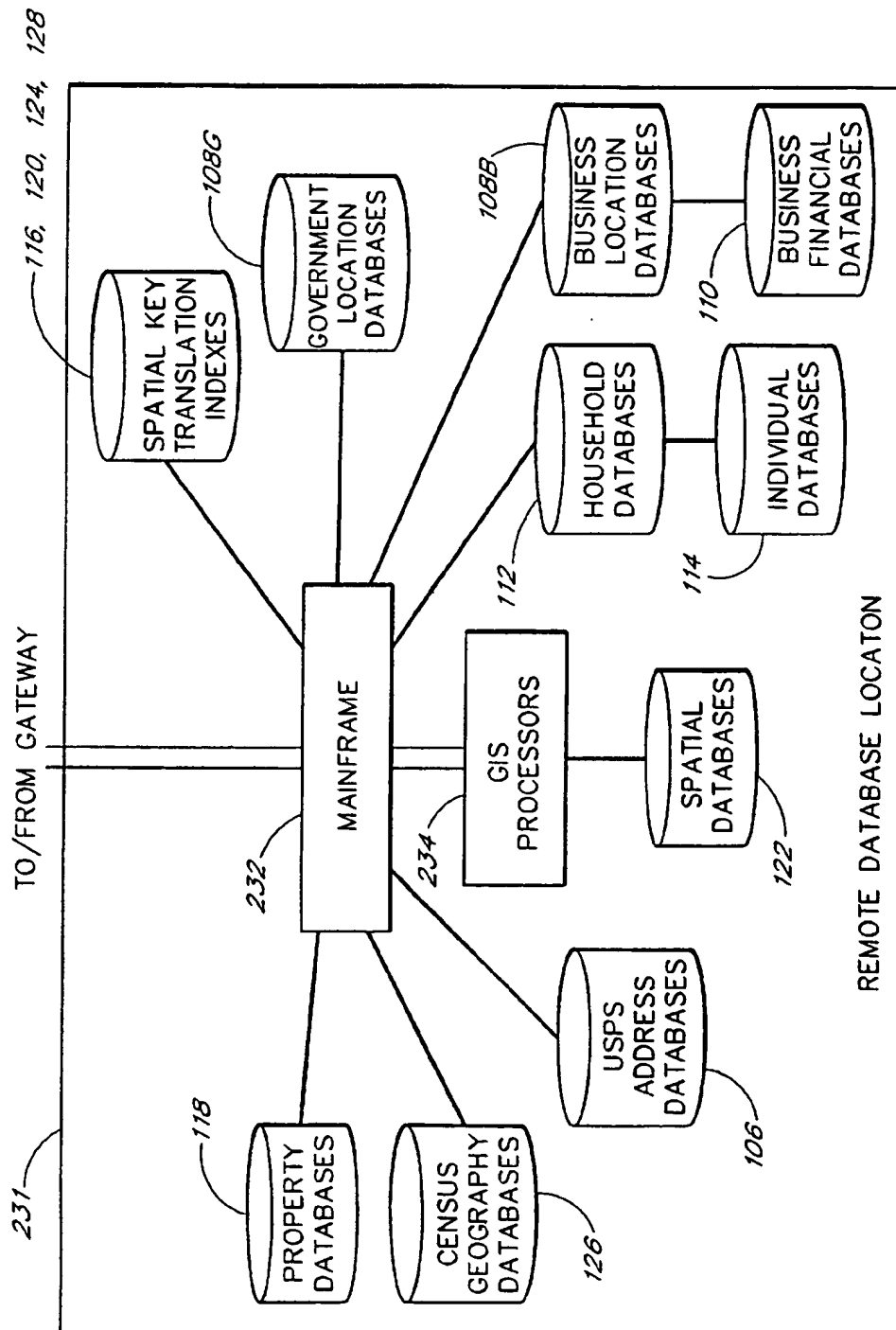


FIG. 4

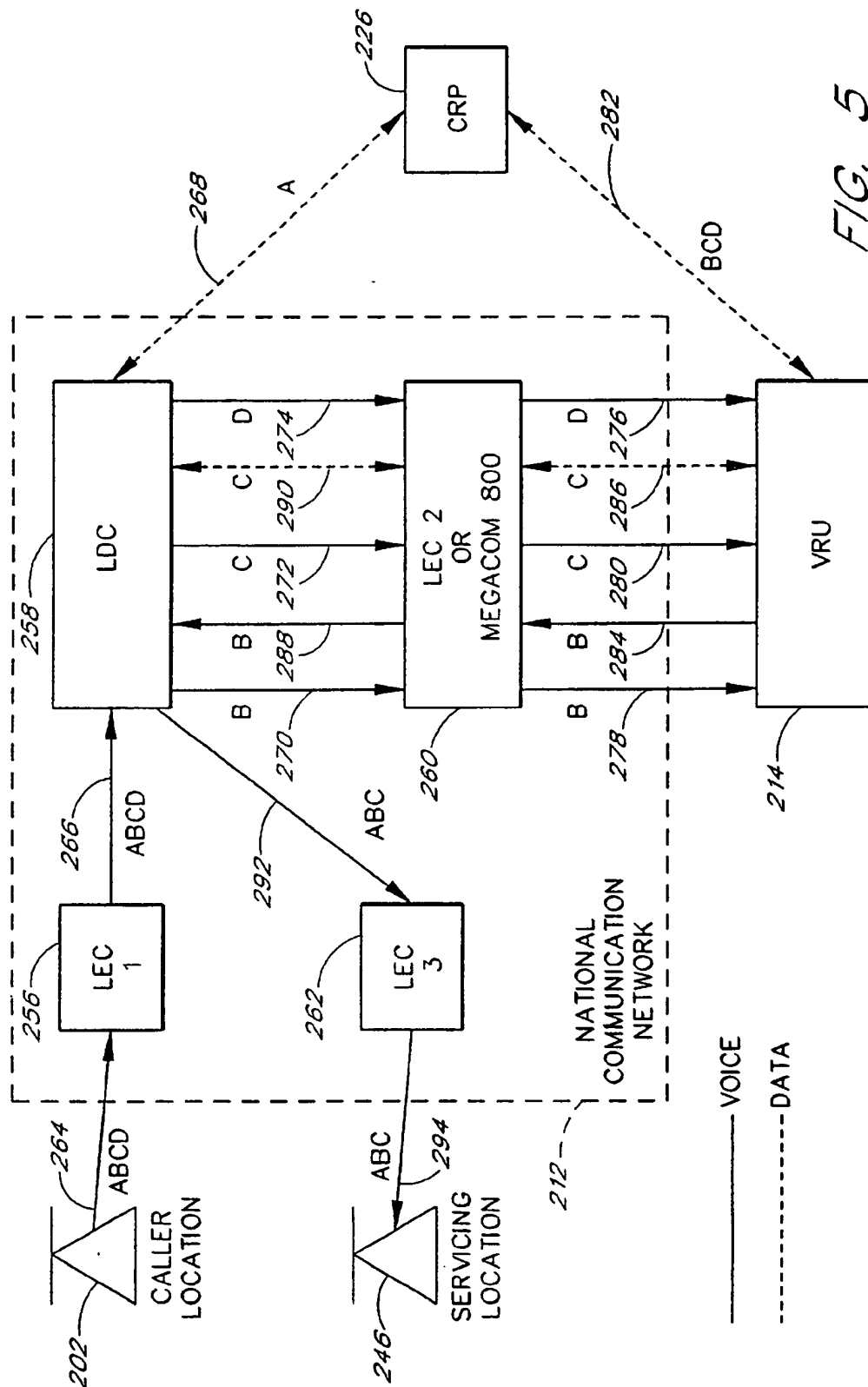
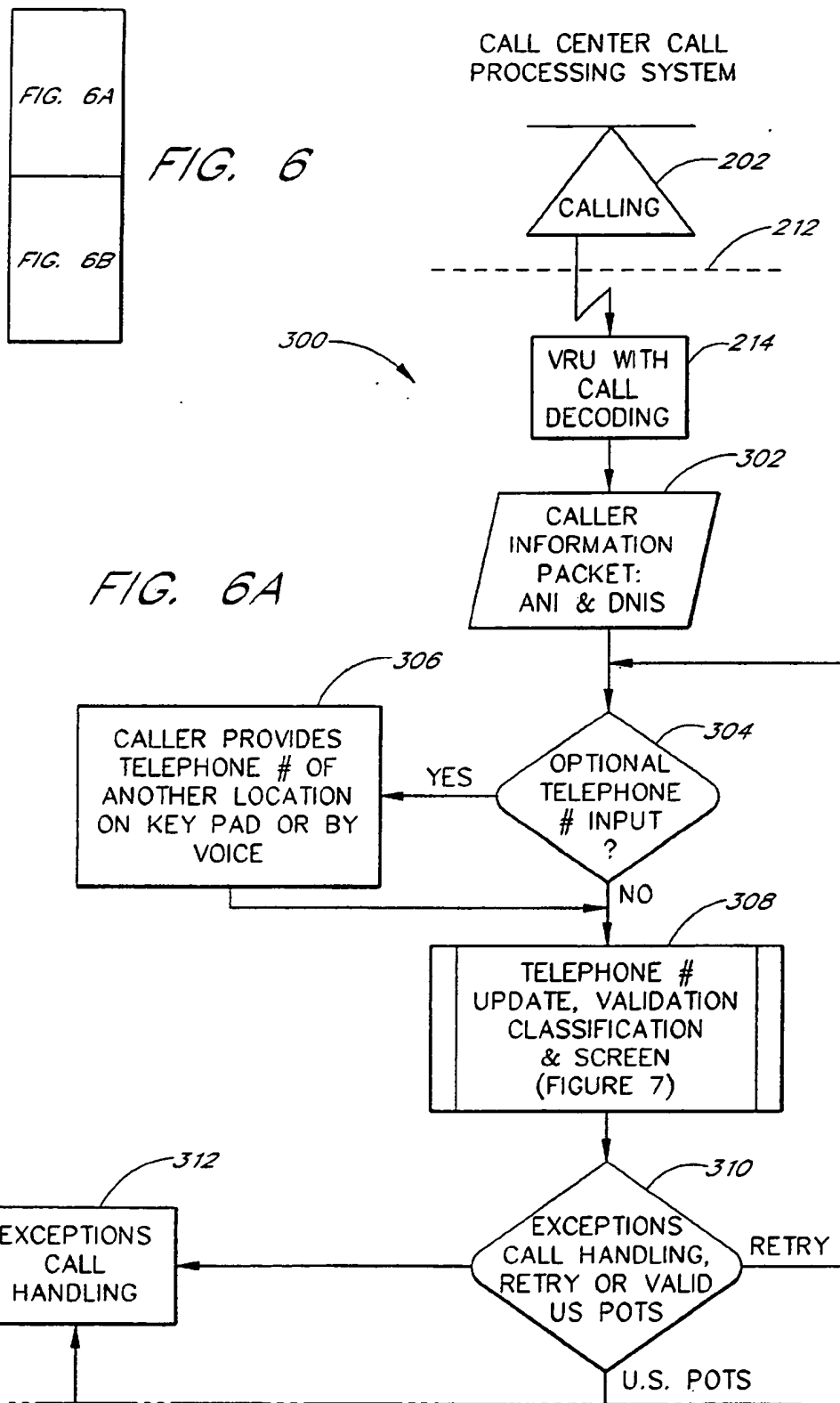
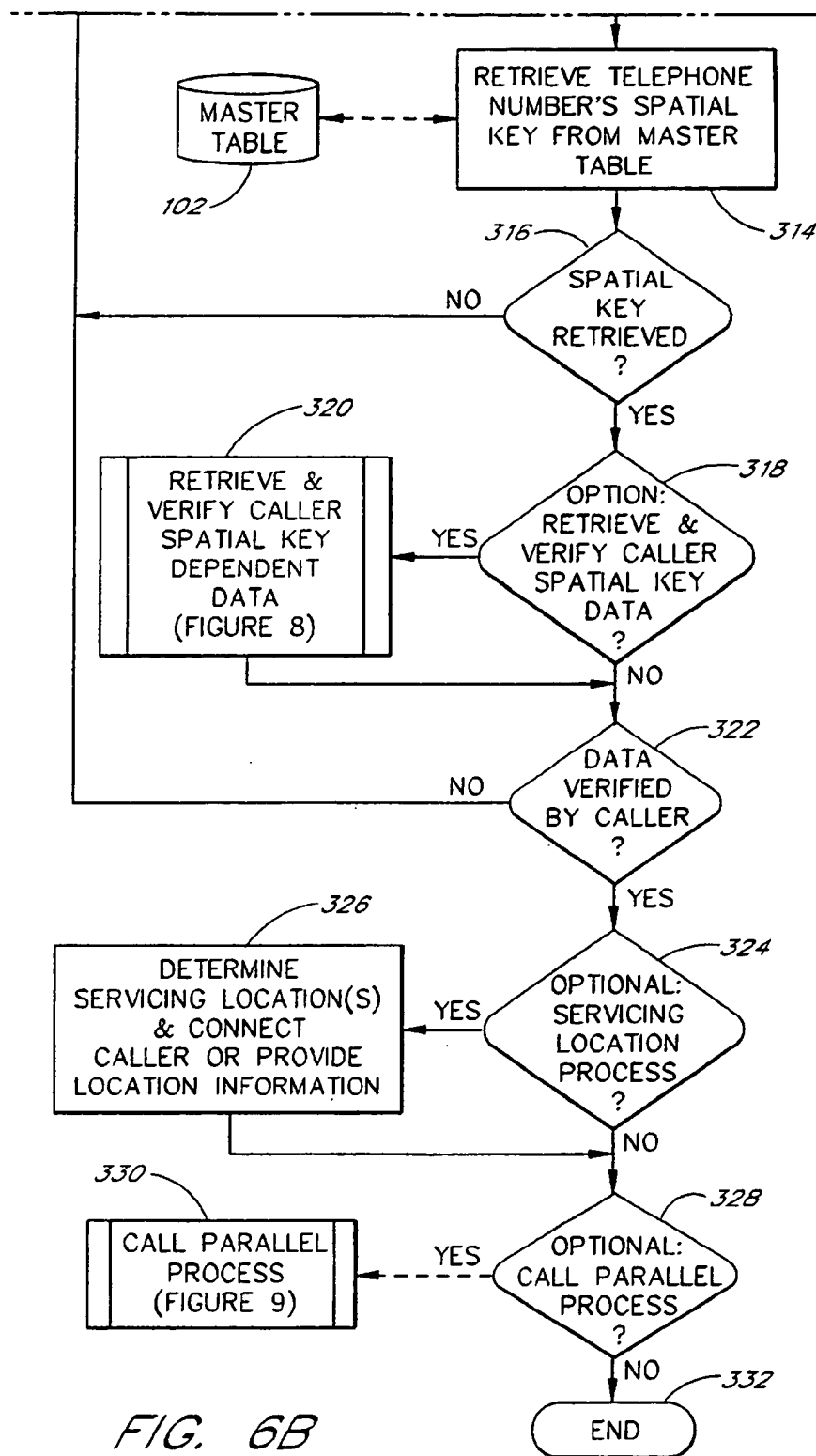
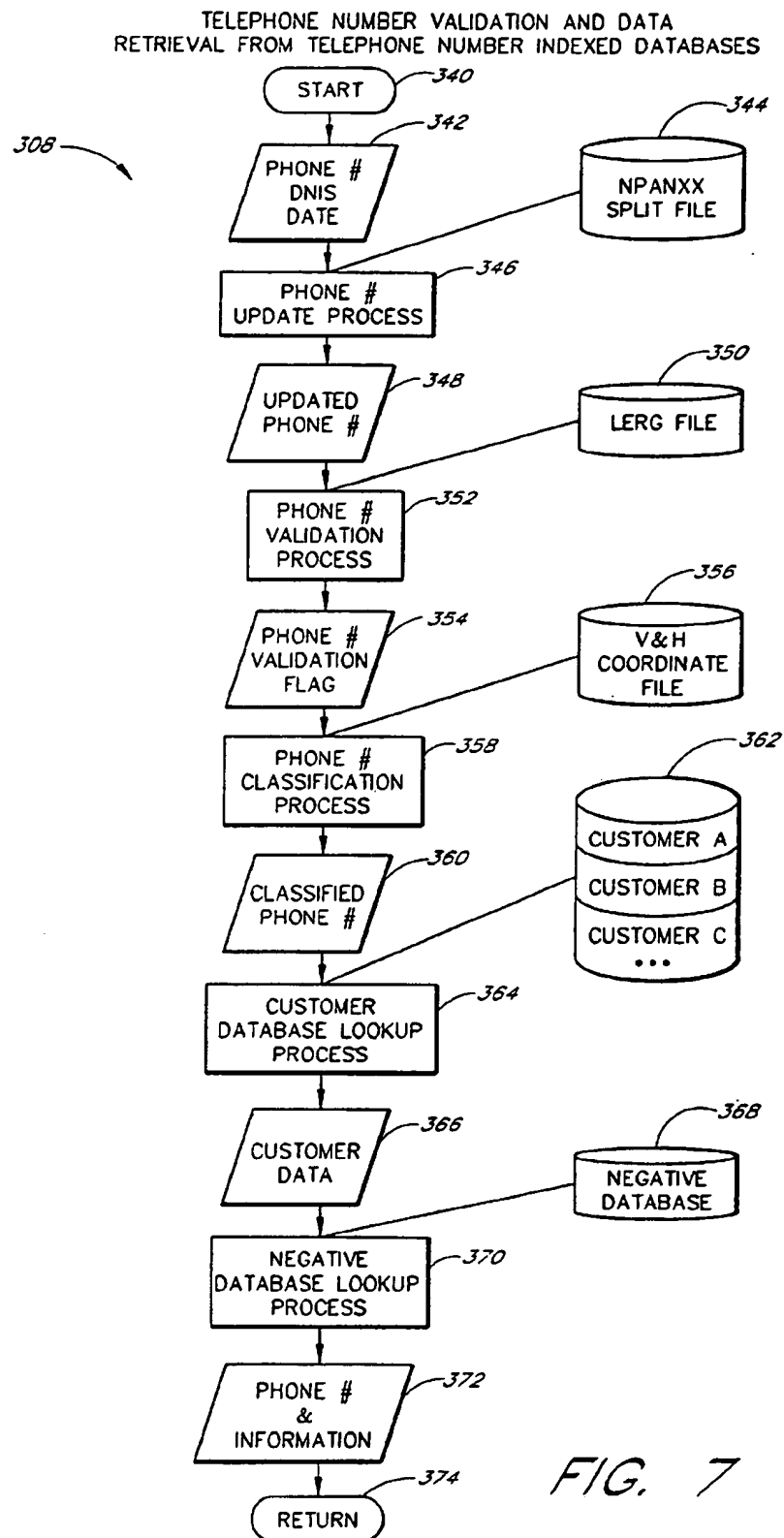
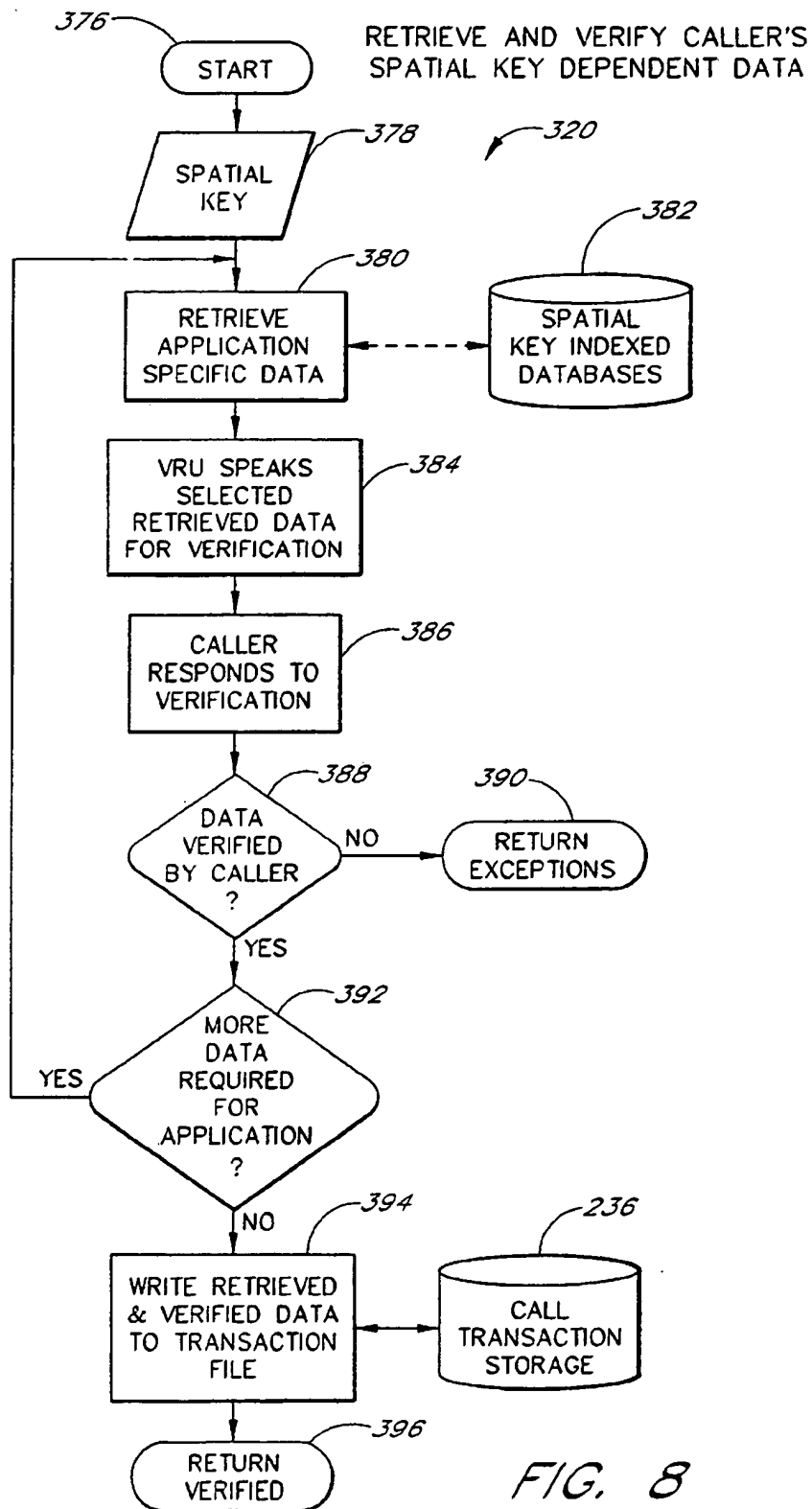


FIG. 5









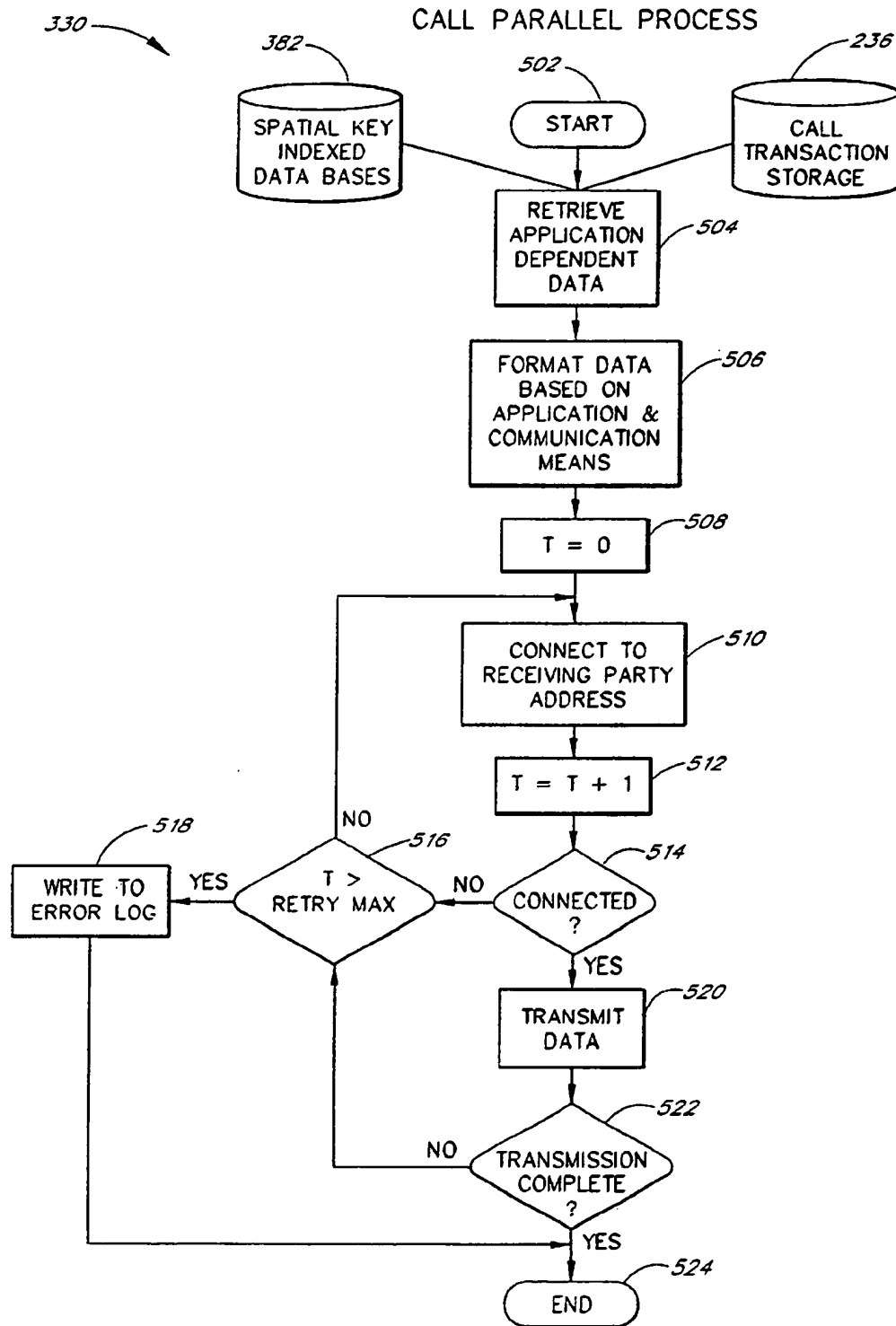


FIG. 9

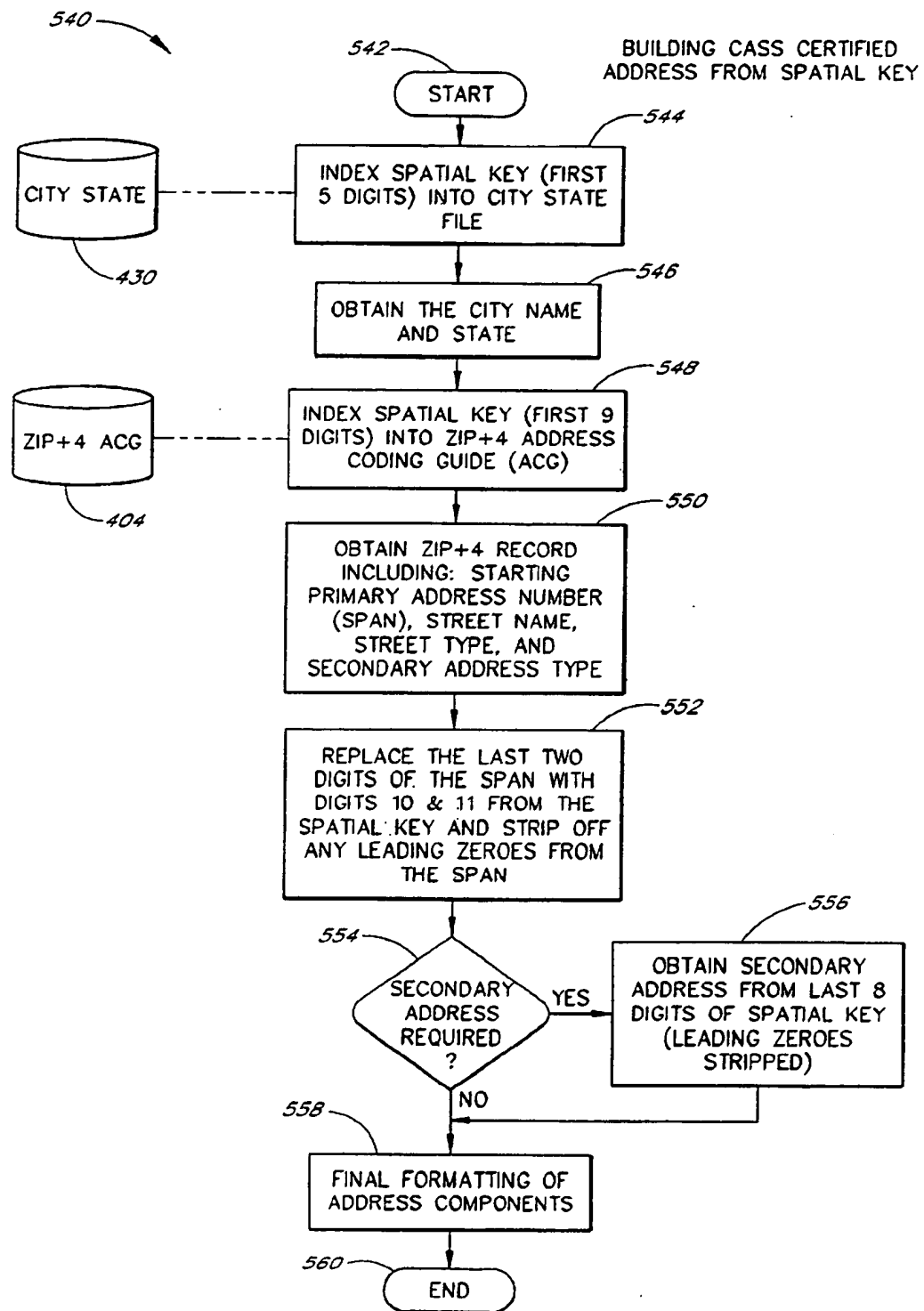


FIG. 10

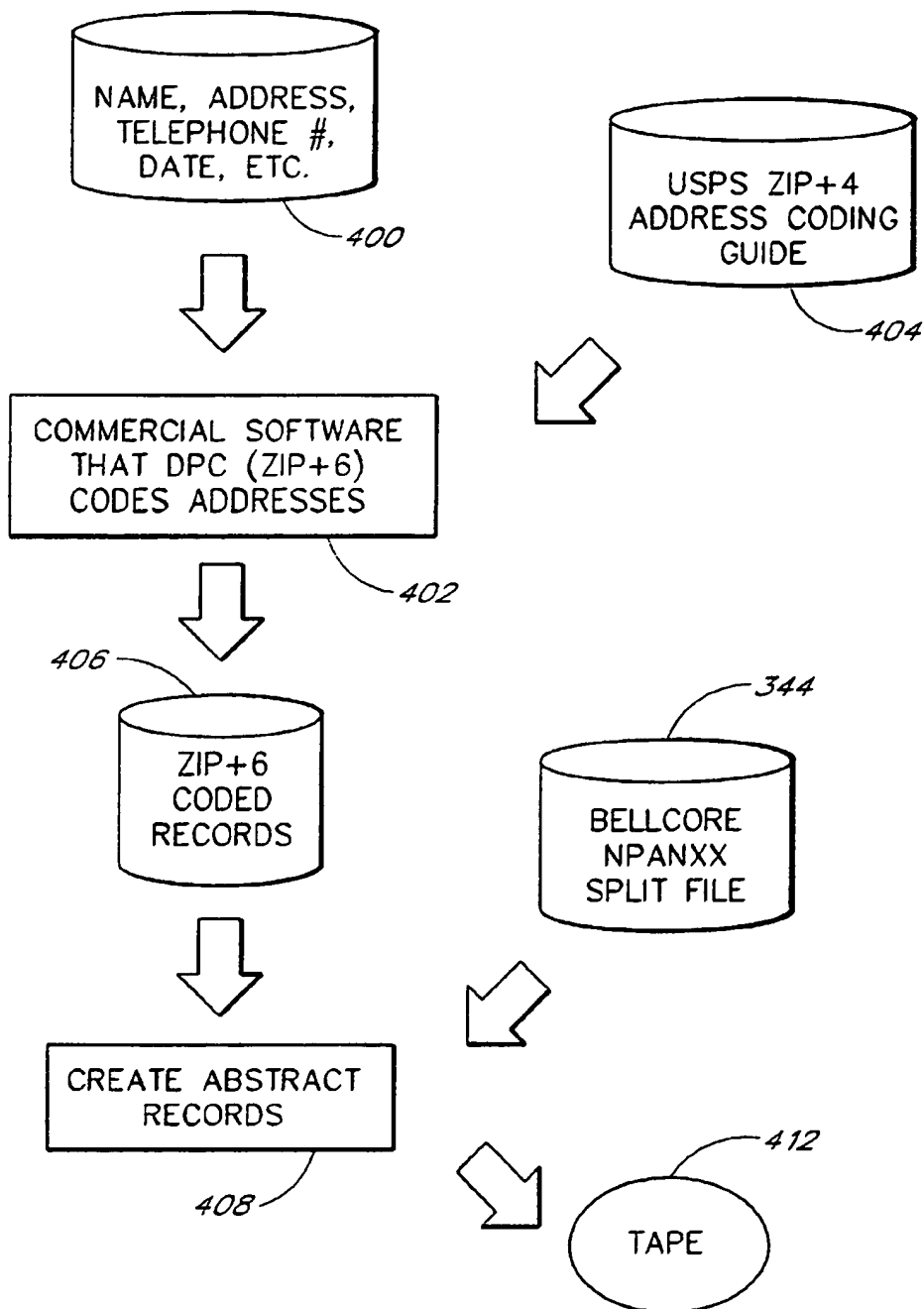
PROCESS FOR DATA PROVIDER
TO PROVIDE MASTER TABLE
VERIFICATION RECORDS

FIG. 11A

PROCESS TO BUILD MASTER TABLE UPDATE
RECORDS FROM DATA PROVIDER SUPPLIED
VERIFICATION RECORDS

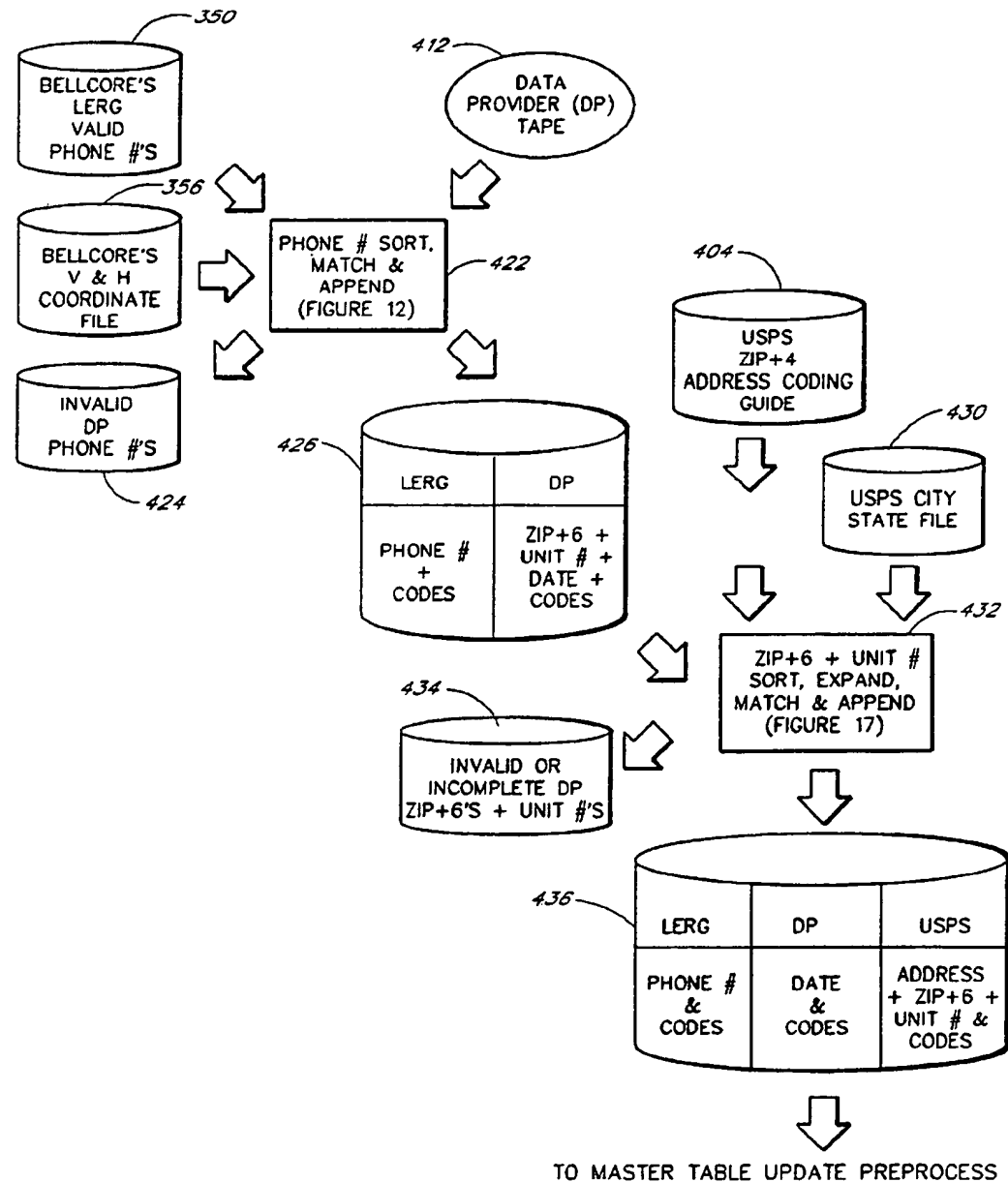


FIG. 11B

MASTER TABLE UPDATE PREPROCESS

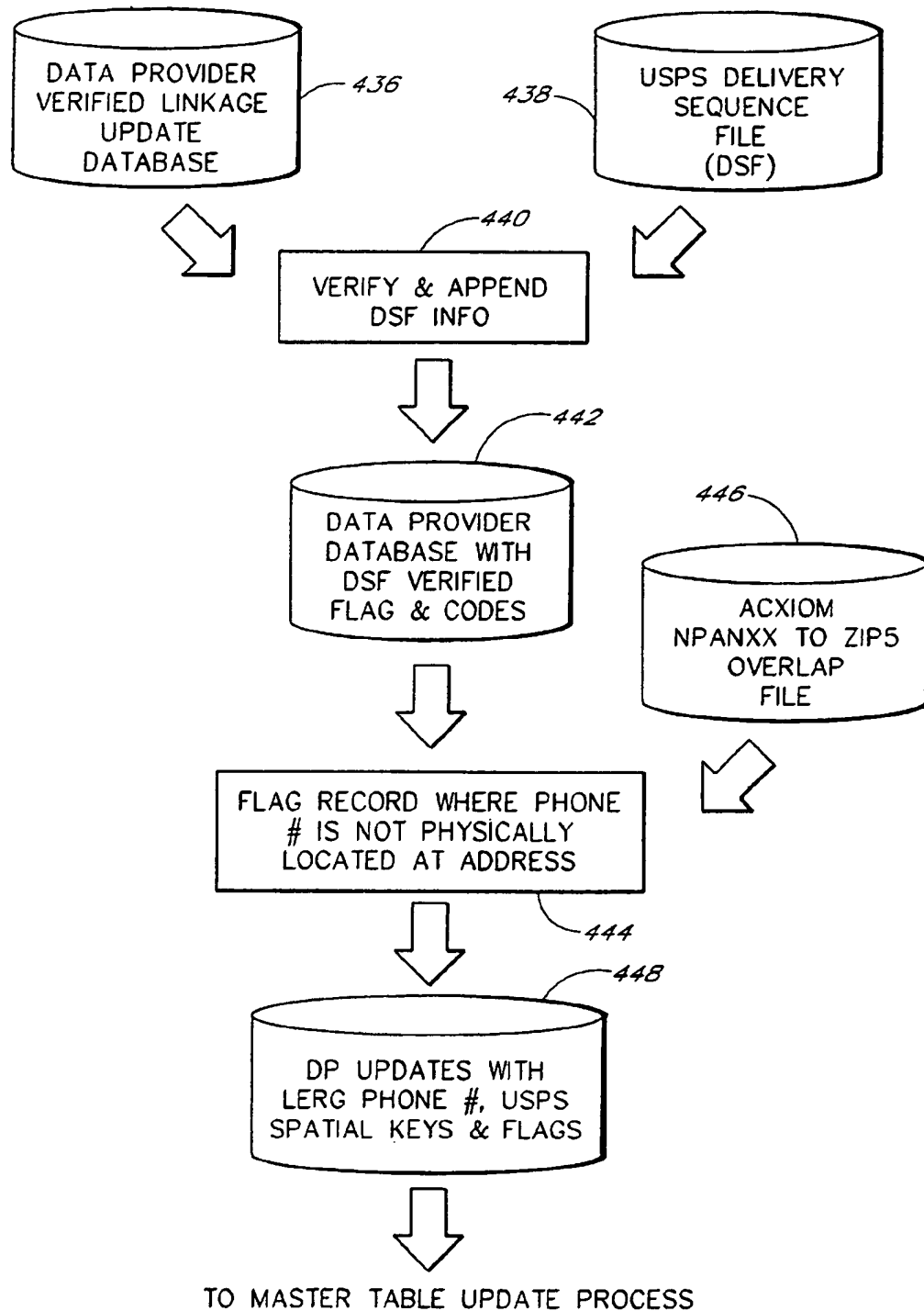


FIG. 11C

MASTER TABLE UPDATE PROCESS

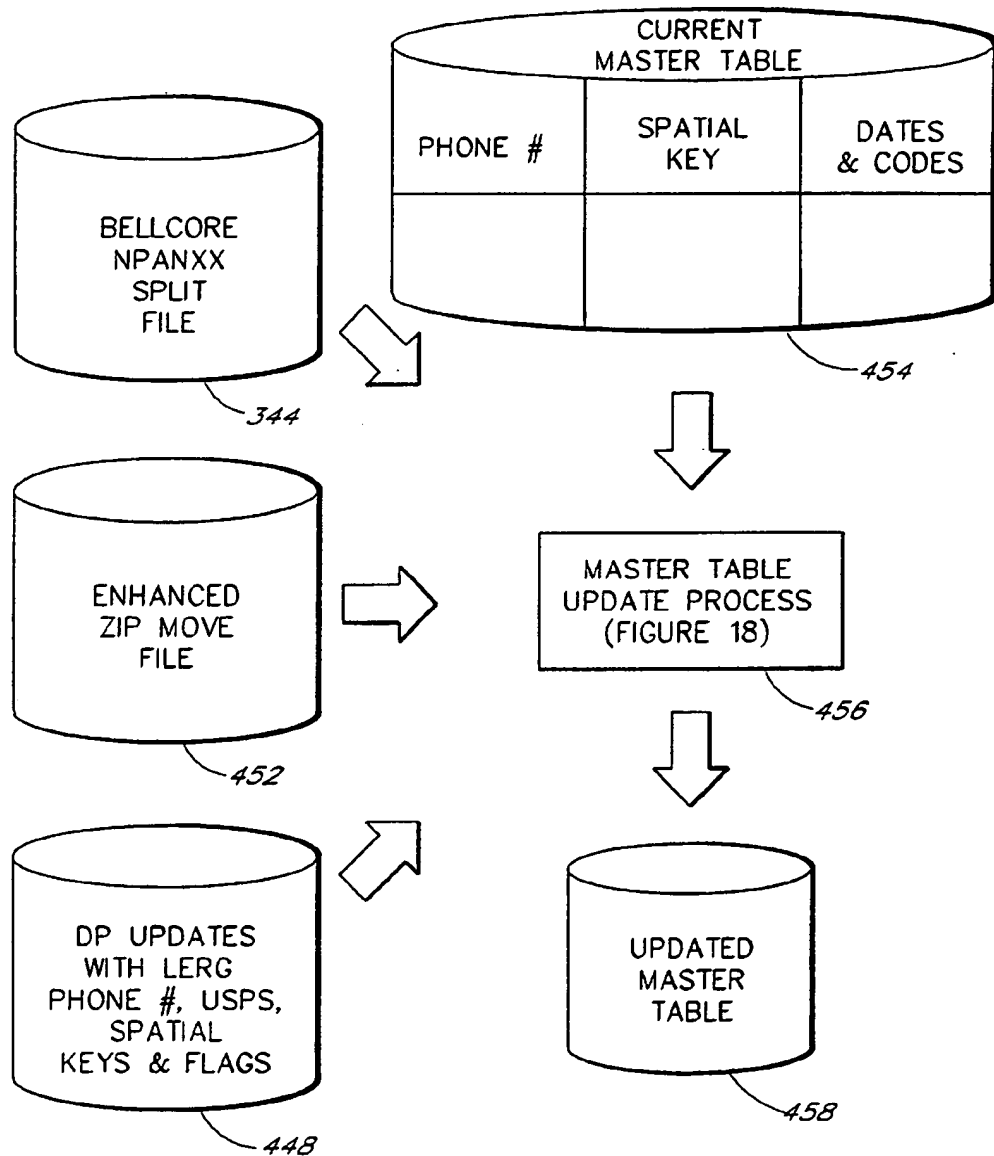


FIG. 11D

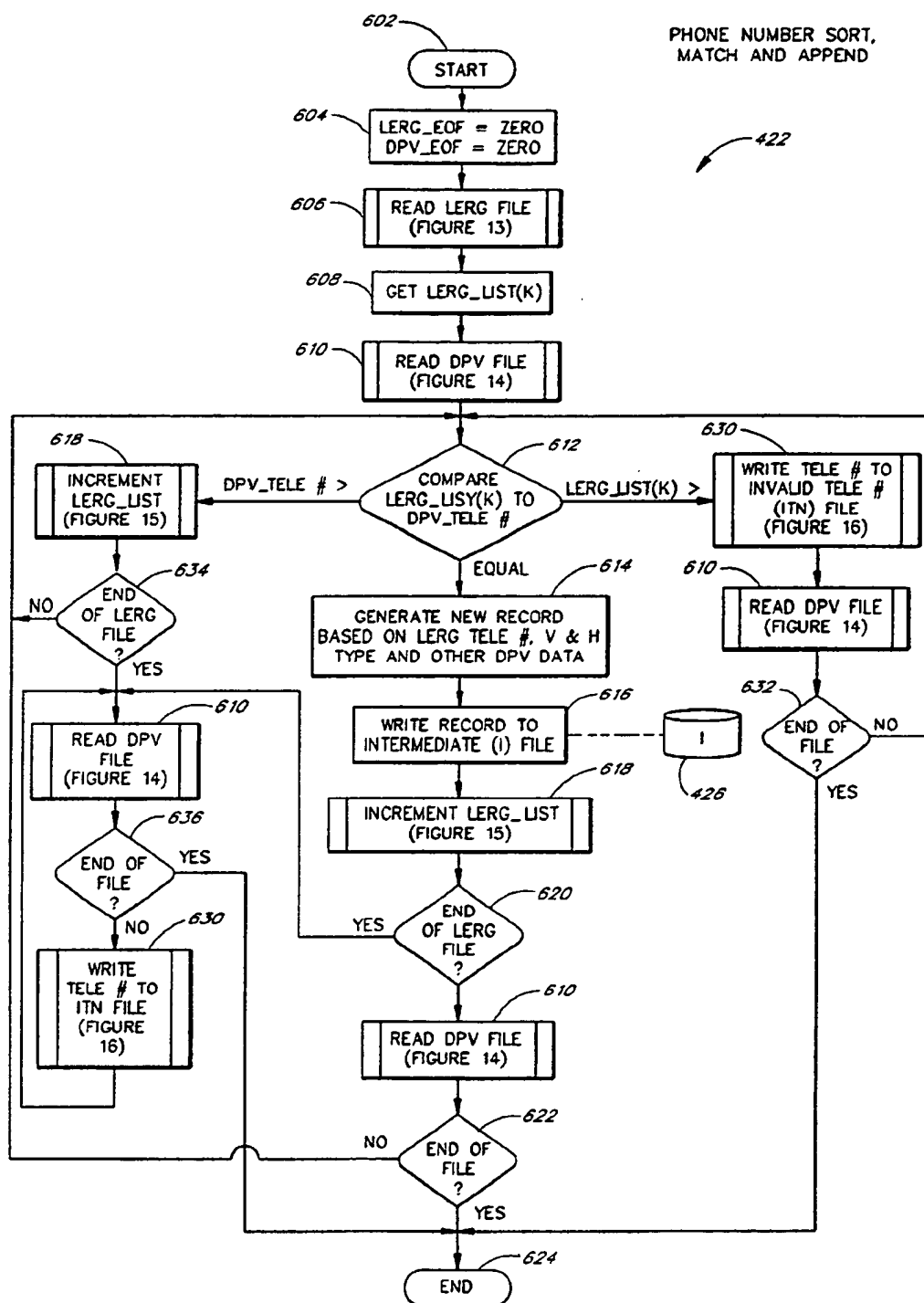


FIG. 12

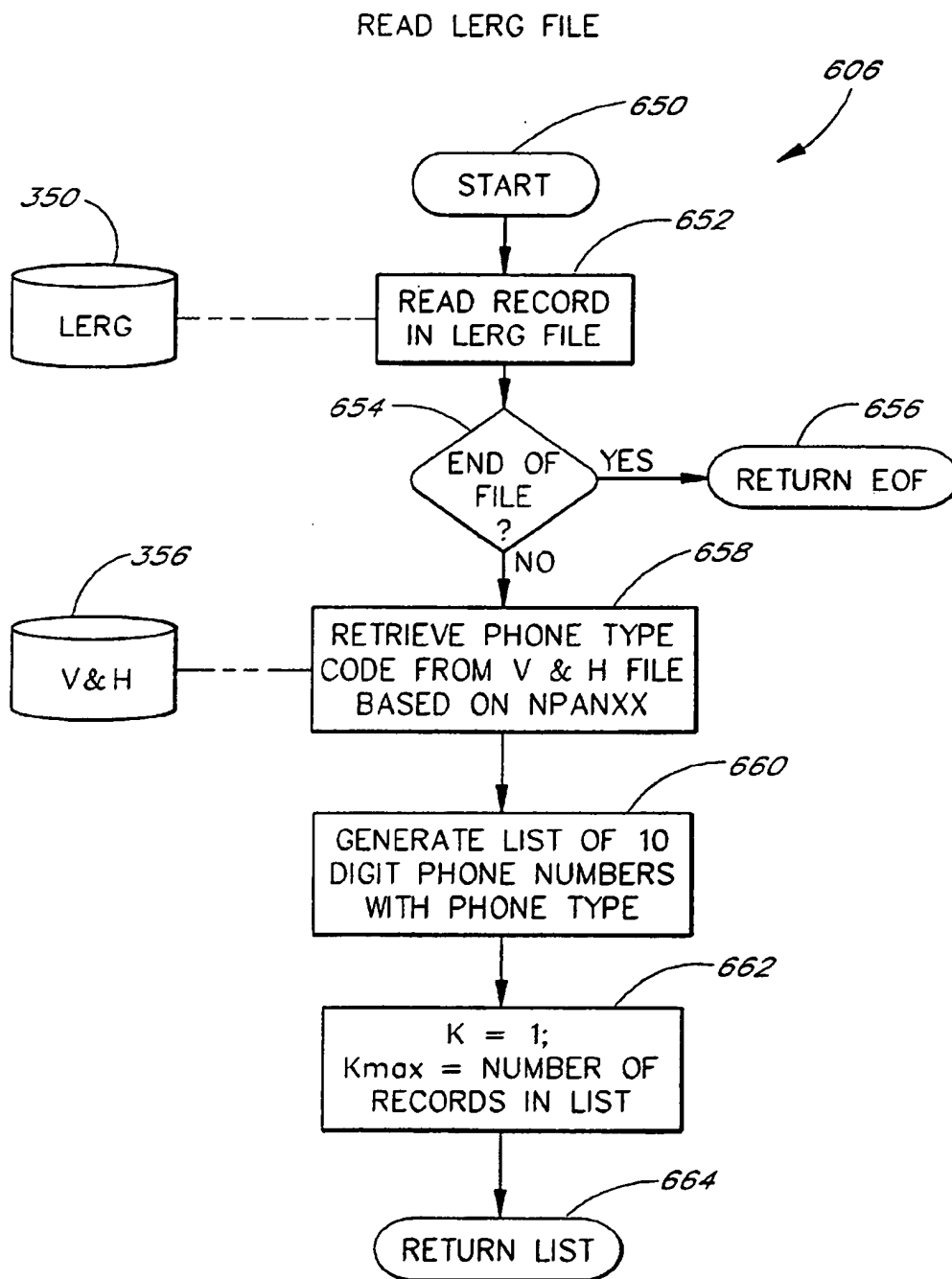
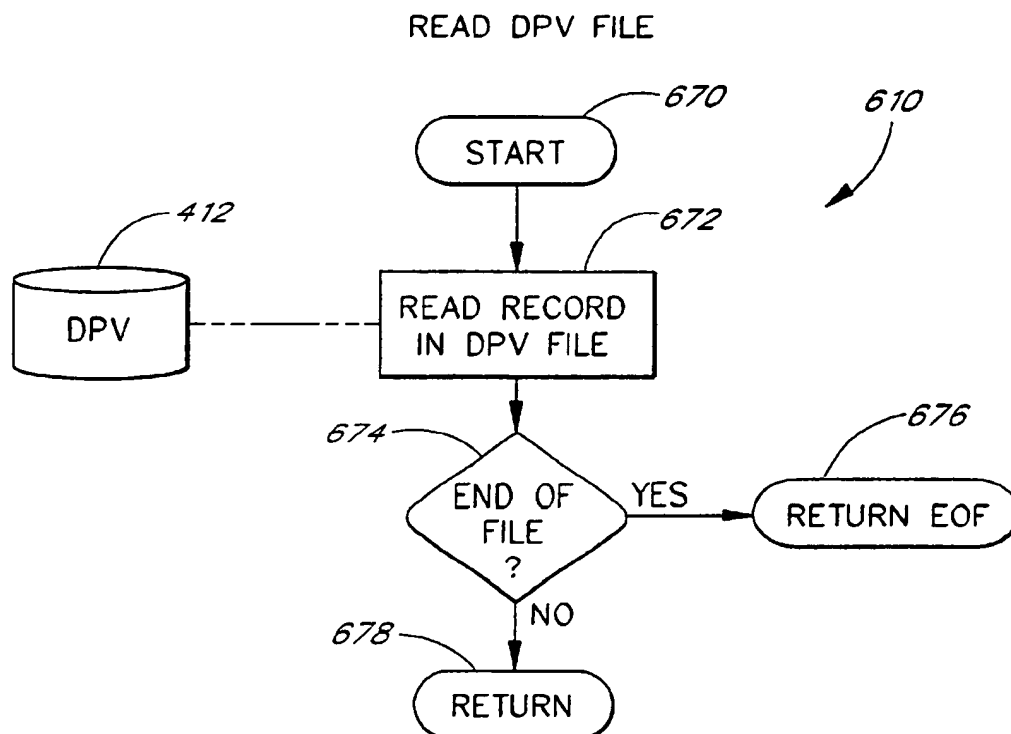
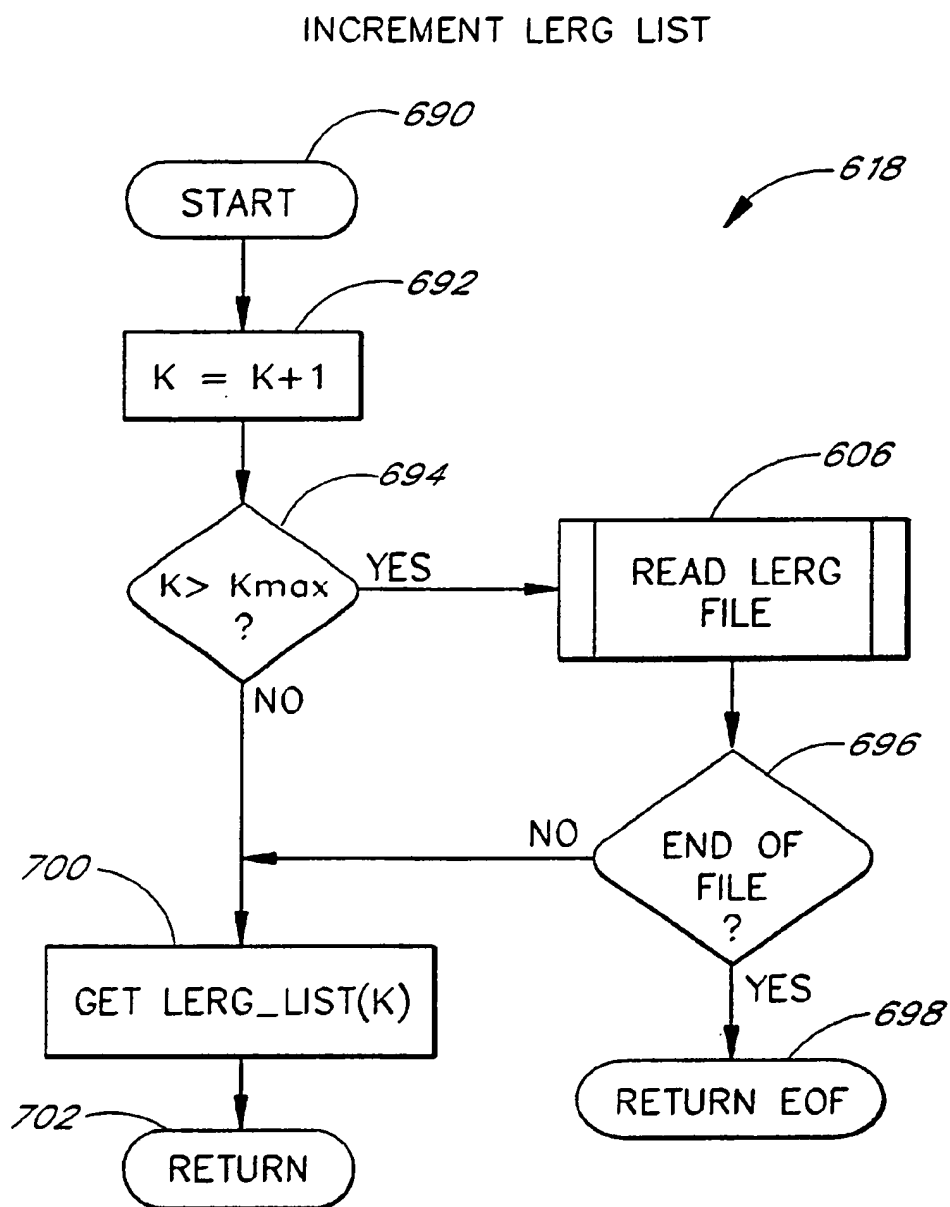
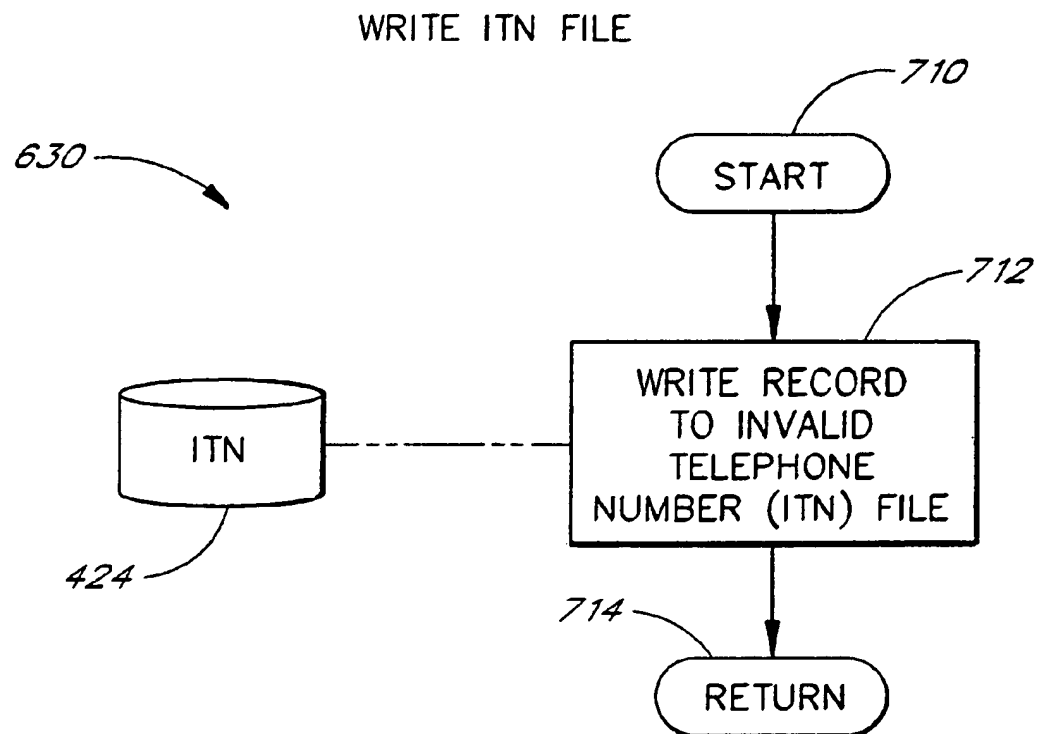


FIG. 13

*FIG. 14*

*FIG. 15*

*FIG. 16*

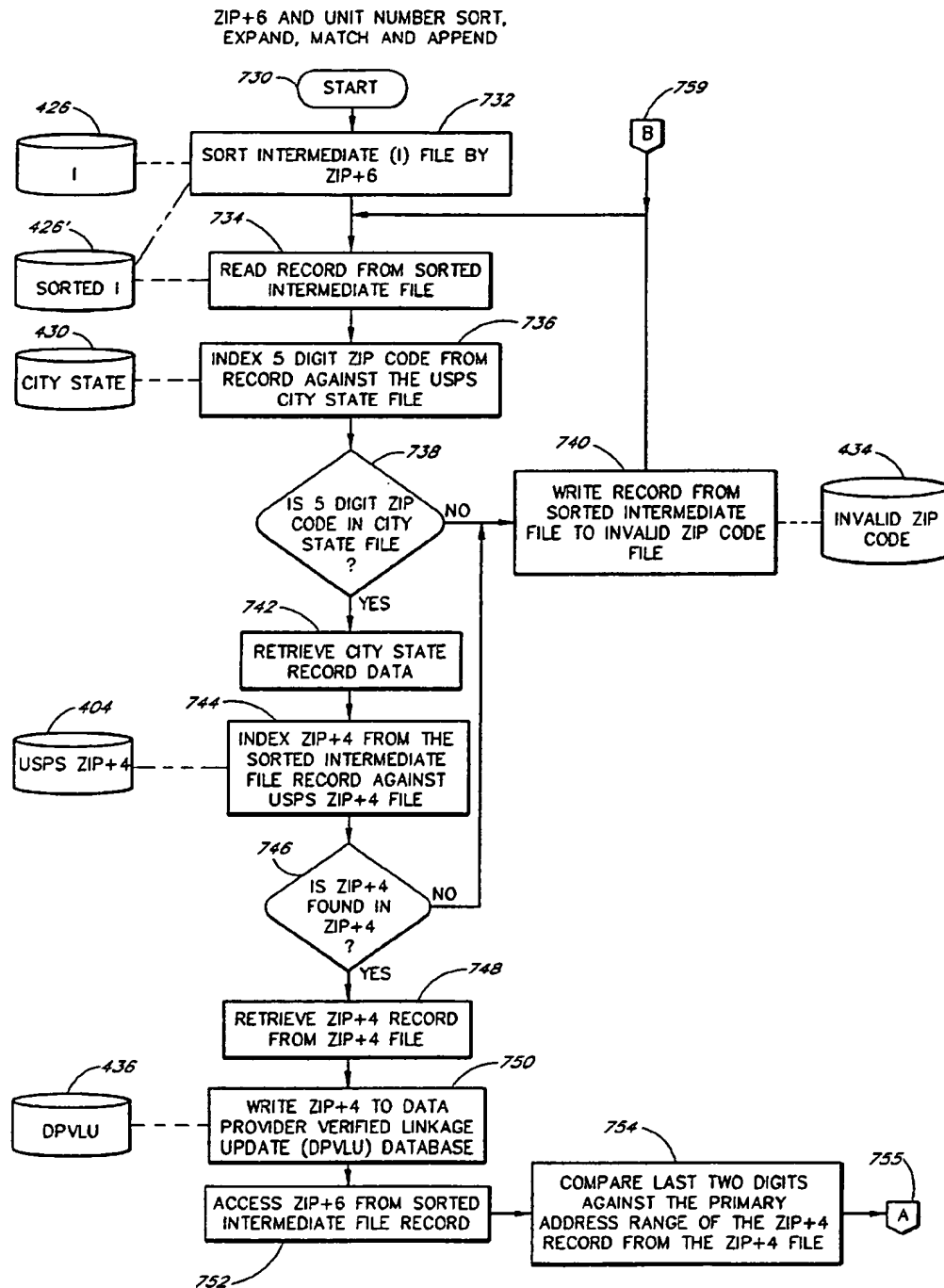


FIG. 17A

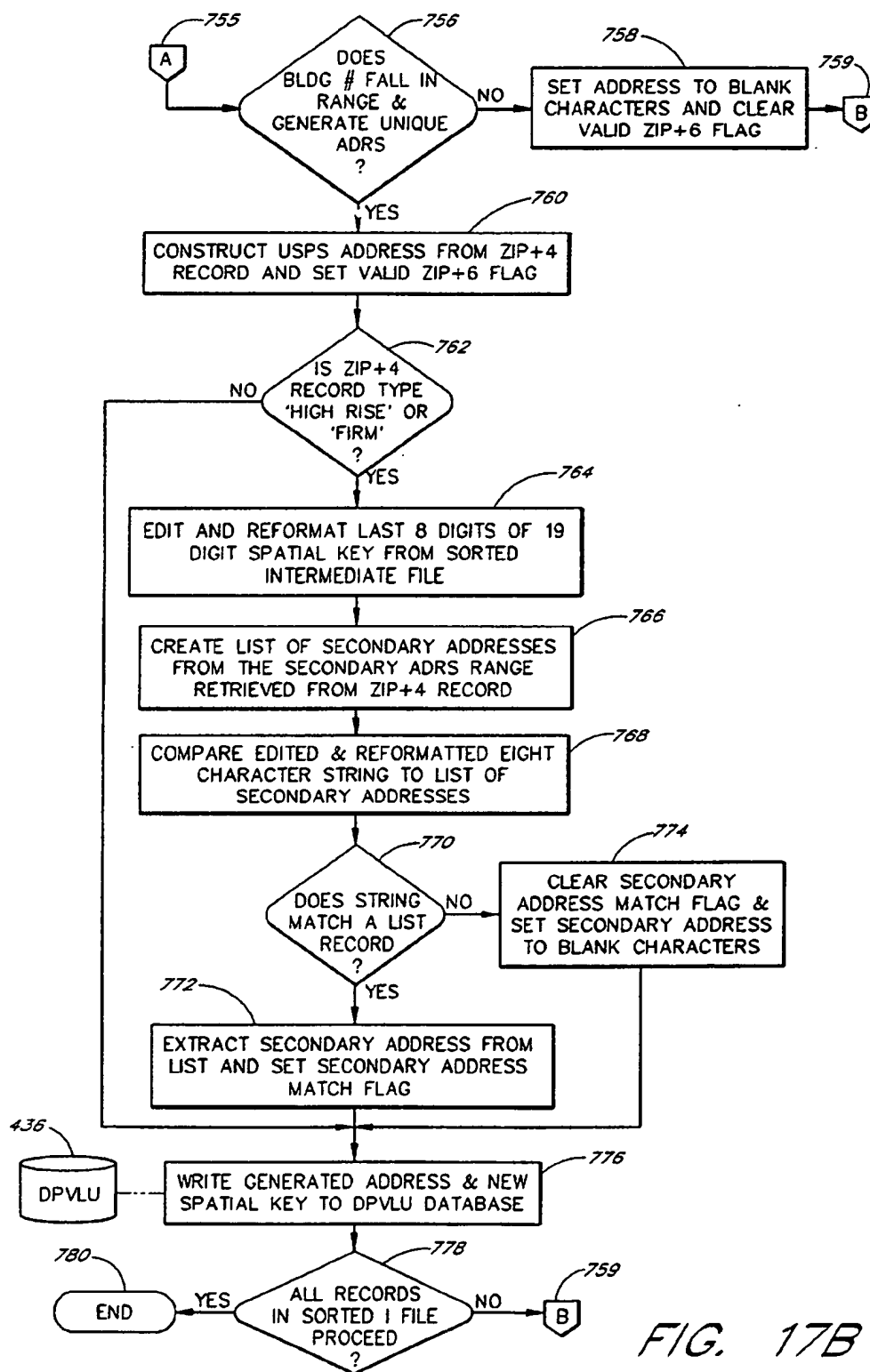


FIG. 17B

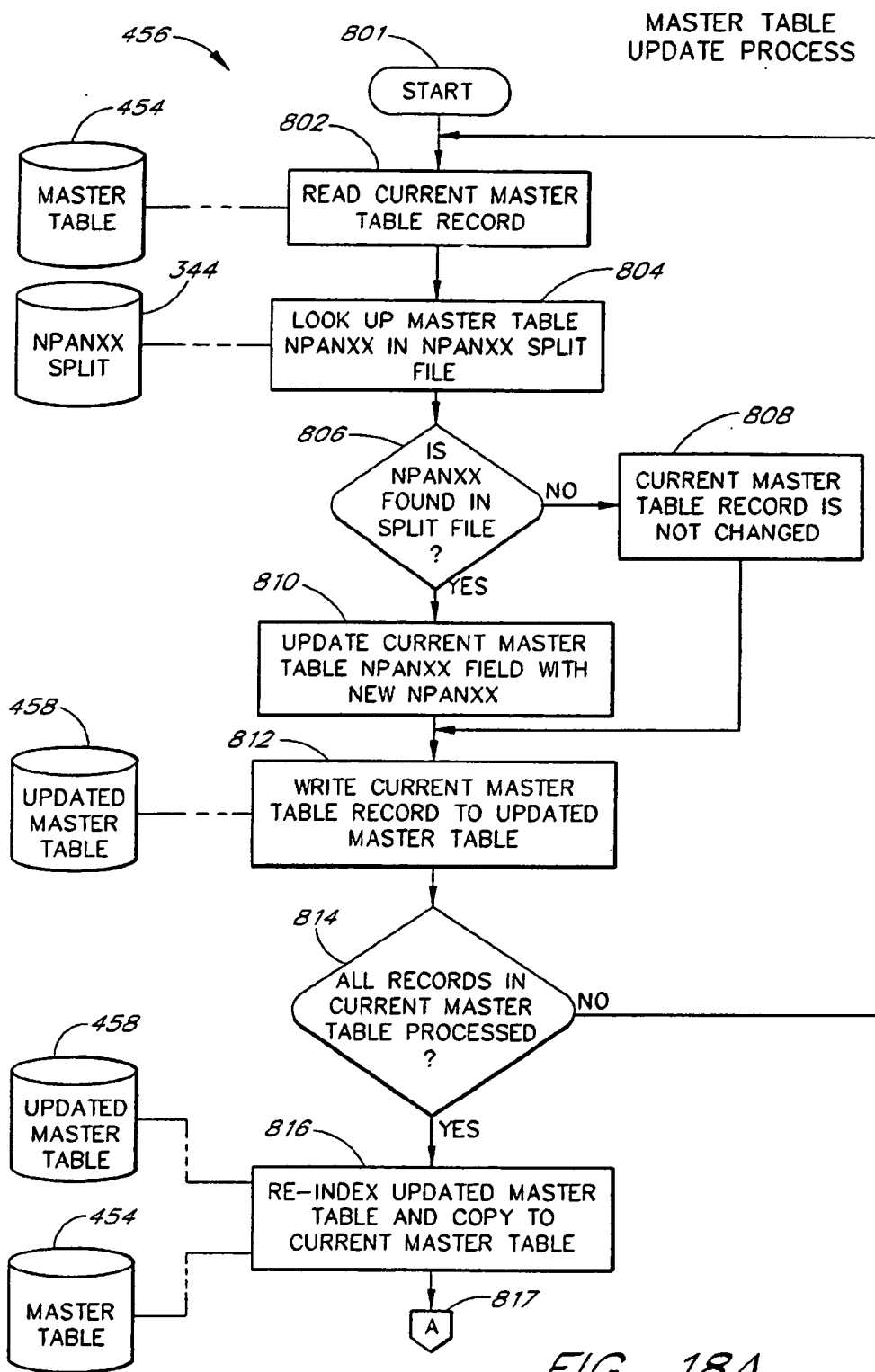


FIG. 18A

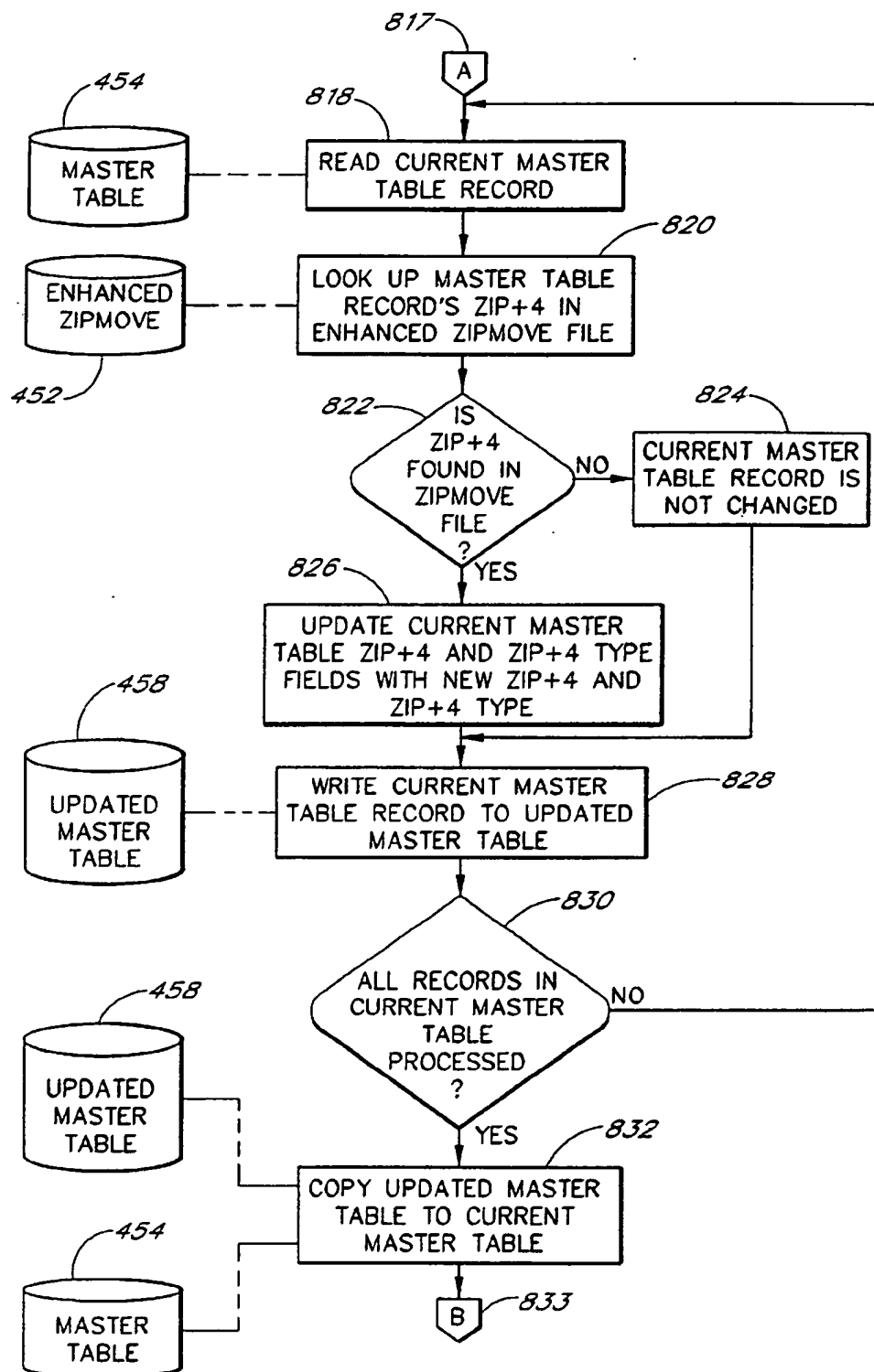


FIG. 18B

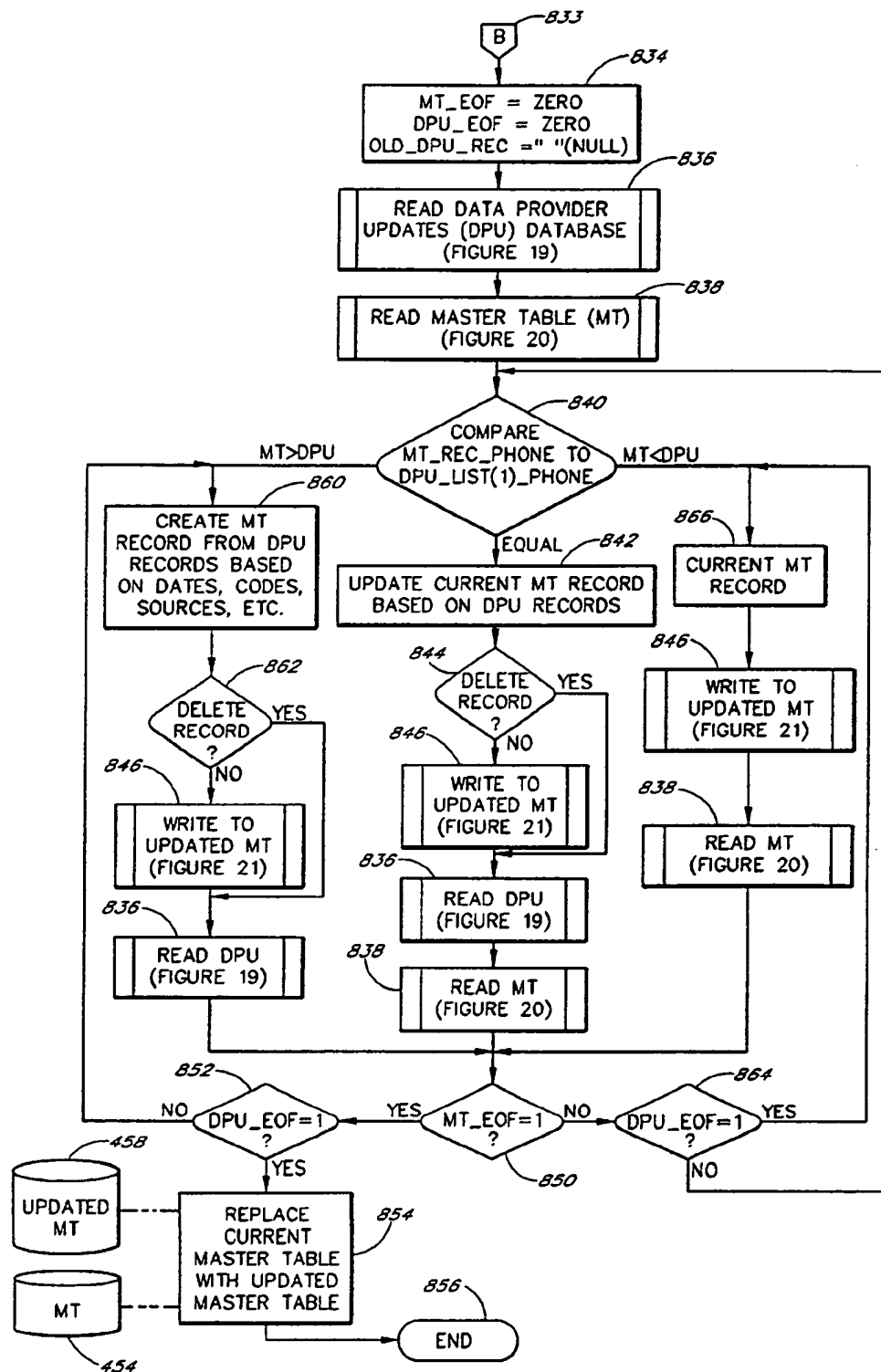


FIG. 18C

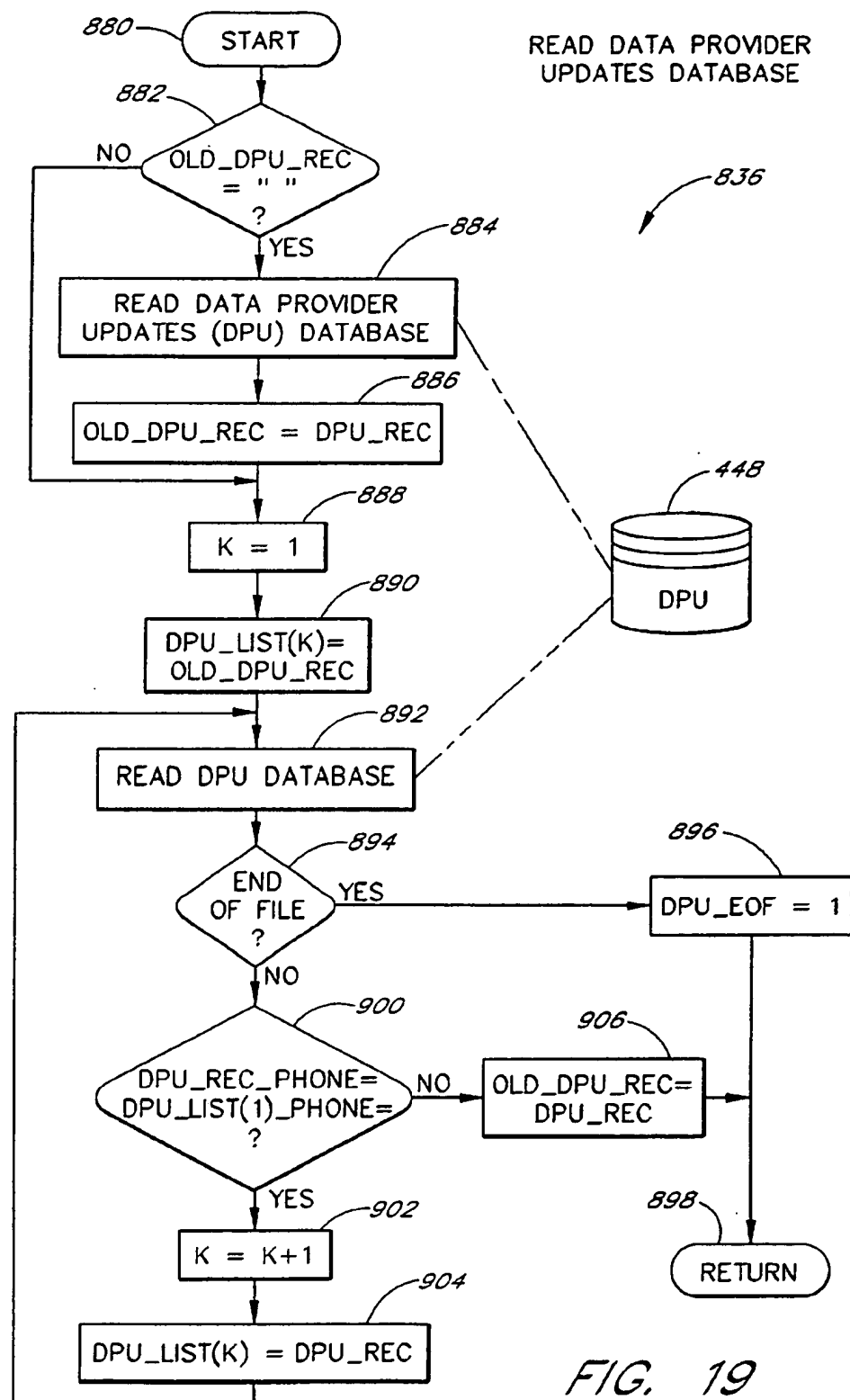


FIG. 19

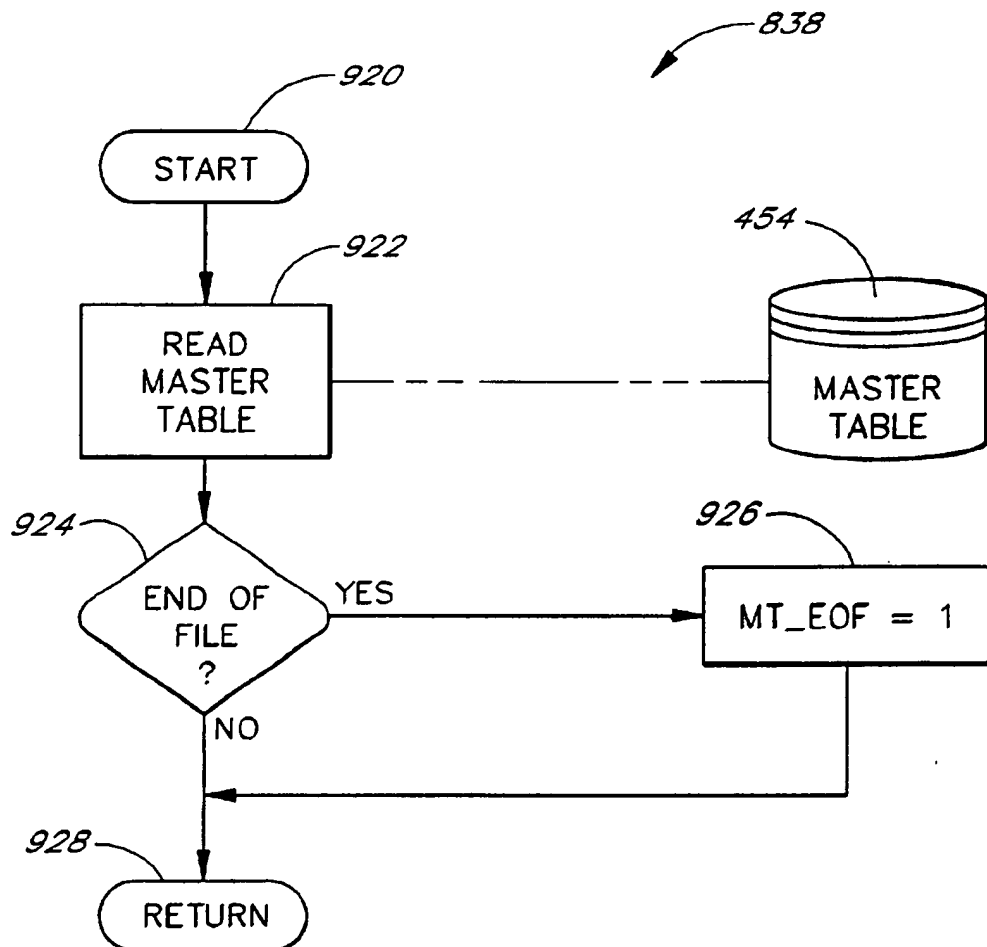
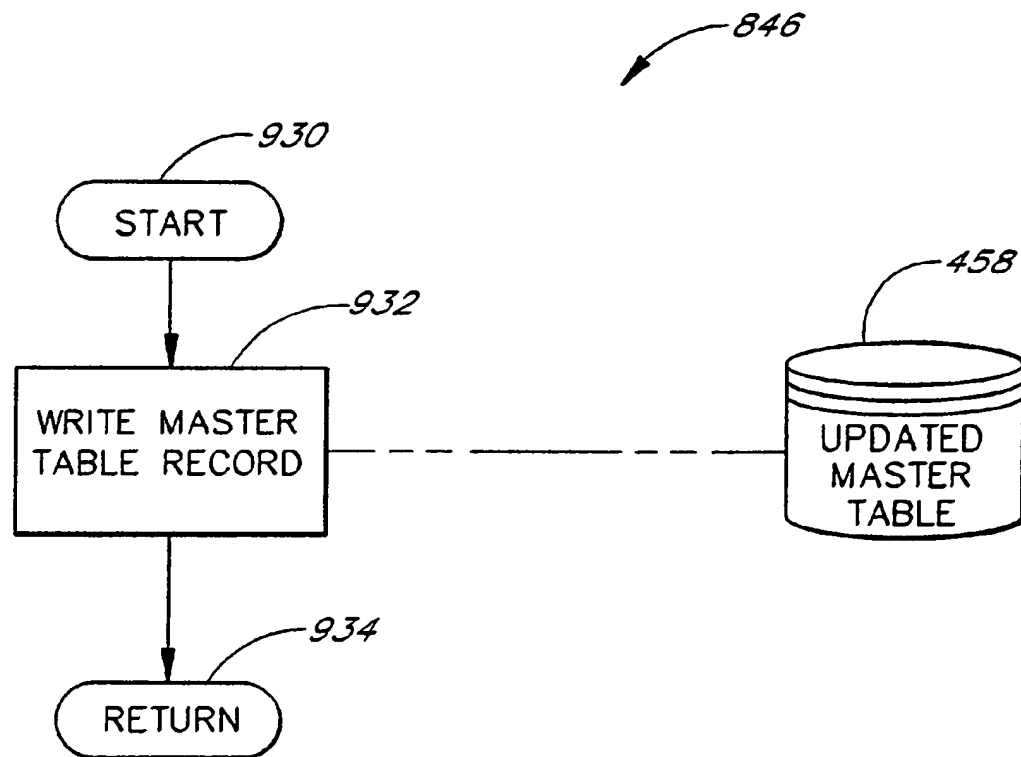


FIG. 20

*FIG. 21*

ONE NUMBER, INTELLIGENT CALL PROCESSING SYSTEM

RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/477,181, filed Jan. 4, 2000 now U.S. Pat. No. 6,185,290, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/211,475, filed Dec. 14, 1998 now U.S. Pat. No. 6,058,179, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 08/748,192, filed Nov. 12, 1996 now U.S. Pat. No. 5,901,214, and claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/019,526, filed Jun. 6, 1996, each of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

The present invention relates to telecommunications call processing. More specifically, it relates to processing of a vanity telephone number dialed by a caller with a conventional telephone, so as to access a national virtual telephone number database to provide benefits, such as improved connection efficiency, selected services or products, to the caller, the servicing location(s) associated with the vanity number dialed and/or the vanity number advertiser.

2. Description of the Related Technology

Traditionally, entities with multiple employees, departments and/or locations, such as businesses and government agencies, have provided their customers with multiple telephone number points of contact, with usually at least one telephone number for each employee, department and location. This has placed a major burden on customers and prospective customers to find, remember, dial and be connected to the correct intra-entity telephone number for the services desired. It also has created cost and administrative burdens on these entities to publish and advertise multiple telephone numbers.

In the new world of electronic commerce, many such entities have started advertising "one number", vanity telephone numbers as their primary customer contact point. These vanity numbers are usually national 10 digit numbers starting with area codes such as "800," "888," or "900", local 7 digit numbers starting with an exchange such as "555" and "950" or special purpose three digit numbers like "311", "411" or "911". These numbers are usually easy to remember, such as 1-800-FLORIST. Unlike regular telephone calls with only two participants, vanity telephone number calls can have three participants, recipients, or beneficiaries:

1. The Vanity Number Advertiser
2. The Caller or Consumer
3. The Servicing Location(s)

Based on the increased volume of calls to these vanity numbers and customer demands for 24 hour support during seven days a week, reduced telephone busy signals and shorter hold times, vanity number advertisers have begun answering these calls with a new technology called Voice Response Units (VRU), also known as Interactive Voice Response (IVR).

Currently, there are over 50 manufacturers of VRUs. The commercialization of the VRU and changes in advertising practices has also spawned large numbers of new VRU applications from product manufacturers. Products may be advertised by an infomercial showing an "800" number to call so that a consumer may obtain a list of nearby dealers and/or a product brochure. The 800 number is answered by a VRU which requests the caller to record their name and

address. This partially automates the call process, but requires large amounts of disk storage to store the caller provided recorded voice information and creates a large amount of post call work for the advertiser. For example, the advertiser must listen to, understand, transcribe the caller's name and address, certify the address by use of a United States Postal Service (USPS) coding accuracy support system (CASS), manually compile a list of nearby dealers and mail the information packet to the caller's address. These inefficiencies have created a need to further automate VRU applications. This is accomplished through what is now called intelligent call processing technology.

In this context, automated intelligent call processing (ICP) is defined as the capture of network provided data, such as automatic number identification (ANI) and dialed number identification service (DNIS), and caller-provided data, such as data entered by Dual Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) through a Touchtone telephone key pad or the caller speaking through the telephone to a VRU. ICP also involves the VRU accessing external databases that can decipher, validate, process and fulfill the caller's request by playing pre-recorded messages, creating call specific messages and speaking them to the caller, storing call captured information that can be accessed by or forwarded to the caller, servicing location or vanity advertiser, and/or automatically routing and connecting the caller to the servicing location or department. Semi-automated intelligent call processing is characterized by automating components of the call through intelligent call processing, but having some portion of the request still requiring live operator support during the call.

There are three primary components to an intelligent call processing system:

- the network: the system level hardware and software that provides the platform for intra- and inter-system and participant communications;
- the information retrieval, processing and storage: the databases and processing algorithms that provide the network application with the information required to fulfill the request; and
- the applications: the processes that process and fulfill the request(s) of the caller, the servicing location and/or the vanity advertiser by utilizing the network and the retrieved, processed and stored information.

THE NETWORK

The VRU is the device that can be used to replace the network operator and/or the answering party. Early primitive, non-integrated ancestors to the VRU are the caller ID box and the answering machine. Current state-of-the-art VRUs are programmable devices that not only capture and process network provided data but also accurately translate caller spoken numbers and words into textual or binary data, and convert digital text in the form of words and sentences into speech that is understandable by most callers. The VRU capabilities in these areas are continuing to rapidly improve. The last remaining obstacle to VRU is automation is immediate access to more information. This required better network access to network and remote databases and a way to associate the digital data stored in these databases with network provided data, such as ANI and DNIS, and caller provided telephone input in the form of sound: voice or DTMF accurately translated into digital data.

The computer network portion of this problem has been addressed with faster 32 bit and 64 bit processors, vast amounts of cheap RAM and disk storage, new levels of Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) and advances in

computer wide area networking that provides real time access to many different databases stored on different computer systems physically located in different parts of the country. This is demonstrated in part by a variety of consumer computer-interface applications supported by computer network services, such as CompuServe®, America Online®, Microsoft Network™ and the Internet.

There are nearly 200 million access points in the national telephone network, which is many times the current number of access points for all of the computer networks combined. The major limitation of the telecommunications voice network is that other than the limited amount of network provided data and voice, the only widely supported communications means is another form of sound, i.e., DTMF, which is a very primitive way of achieving one-way communication. Voice recognition has improved tremendously over the last few years, but is still a long way from being able to translate the words spoken by millions of people with different voices and accents into digital text words with 100% accuracy.

A few access points have videophones that support both sound and video in both send and receive modes. The technology has been around for many years to convert digital text data into video, and digital raster data in the form of maps and pictures into video, and transmit it over the national telecommunications network. There is also primitive technology available to scan and translate video images in the form of hand-written messages and typed characters, words and sentences into digital data, such as the ASCII character set. Today, none of the VRU manufacturers provide either of these capabilities with their current products. As videophones become more common in use, the existing technology to translate digital data into the form of a video image and transmit it to the caller will likely become a standard feature in all next generation VRUs.

A few access points also have computers with modems, speakers, microphones and telephone emulation software, such as Microsoft Phone. There is potential to have the computer translate on-screen typed text into DTMF tones using a more robust DTMF coding scheme and to have this translated back into digital text at the VRU. However, current VRUs do not have this capability.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL, PROCESSING AND STORAGE

Currently, VRUs have no caller-friendly capability to accurately translate caller voice or DTMF input into complex digital database access keys. Consequently, VRU database access has been limited to databases indexed by a simple numeric key. These include pre-recorded messages and internal client customer databases indexed by customer ID. The ID is usually in the form of a telephone number, account number, policy number, order number or other numeric data that is provided by the network, can be entered by DTMF, or accurately translated into digital data by a VRU using current voice recognition technology. This method works for applications with existing customers who know their customer ID. However, for new customers, new businesses or new applications that service different target markets, these internal databases are either too sparse in coverage or do not contain the required information.

On the other hand, there are many frequently updated national databases that have not been accessible by VRUs using network provided data or caller provided telephone input. These include:

The USPS address coding guide.

The US Census Bureau's TIGER (Topographical Integrated Geographic Encoded Record) and 1990 census data files. Geographic and spatial files from Geographic Data Technology, Inc. (GDT) and ETAK®, such as ZIP+4 to latitude and longitude, ZIP+4 to census block, ZIP Code and census boundary, and enhanced TIGER files.

Household and individual databases from Polk, First Data Resources (FDR), Metromail and the big three credit bureaus: Equifax, Trans Union and TRW.

Property databases from TransAmerica, TRW Ready Data and ACXIOM DATAQUICK.

Updated census data files and geodemographic databases from Claritas, Equifax National Decision Systems, Urban Decision Systems (UDS), CACI and Strategic Mapping, Inc. (SMI).

Business and government location databases from American Business Information® (ABI), DUNS, ProCD and Database American.

Business financial databases from DUNS and TRW.

Hundreds of private company, state and local government and regional files of various types.

All the above databases have one or more of the following limitations that has previously restricted them from being used in VRU applications:

They do not contain a telephone number field.

They contain a telephone number field but a high percentage of records have missing telephone numbers, have out of date telephone numbers or have a very limited amount of data associated with the telephone number.

They do not share a common access key that the caller knows, is willing to provide and can easily communicate to a VRU.

The missing link in making all the above data available in real-time to VRU applications is creating a standardized, precise and universal database linkage key that can be assigned to all the United States telephone numbers and all of the above mentioned databases. This key needs to act as a direct and/or translator linkage mechanism between the telephone number and databases for spatial, geographic, USPS address, household, individual, business location, government location, business financial, property and client service locations service areas of any defined geographic size and shape. Since the most common trait shared among the above mentioned databases is their geographic/spatial location, definition and/or relationship, the most logical solution would be a universal hierarchical geographic/spatial linkage key, "Spatial Key". Utilizing the Spatial Key to create a virtual telephone number database would make it practical to automate many VRU applications that provide the caller with information, connect the caller with a servicing location and/or capture or retrieve caller related information to assist the vanity advertiser and/or the servicing location in providing better during call and post-call service to the caller.

Applicant is not aware of any product or method that uses a single key to create a virtual telephone number database by linking to many different and seemingly unrelated databases for supporting multiple applications. Savage et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,954,958) associates the 10-digit telephone number with an address-indexed street network database to provide directions over a telecommunications network to a caller. Savage uses two 10 digit telephone numbers input by the caller to provide directions from point A corresponding to the location of the first telephone number to point B corresponding to the location of the second telephone number.

As a telephone number to address translation mechanism, the Savage system uses the American Business List (ABL)

file which is compiled from the national yellow pages. The ABL file contains approximately 10 million unique business telephone numbers and was originally created for use as a direct marketing database and a national business directory assistance database. The Savage system indexes each 10-digit telephone number into the ABL File to retrieve a business name and a raw address for each end point. In the telecommunications and direct marketing industries, this well-known process of starting with a phone number and looking up a name and address from a directory database is called a reverse directory search. The Savage system uses the raw addresses retrieved by this process as a linkage mechanism to what is referred to as a geodata digitized mapping database from MapInfo®. The source of the Map-Info database most likely is the Census Bureau Geographic Base File-Dual Independent Measurement Encoded (GBF-DIME), which is the predecessor to the TIGER files.

There are many technical issues associated with using a raw, non-standardized and free-formatted address which is composed of a street number, street pre-direction, street name, street type, street post-direction, city name and state as a linkage means between two databases compiled from different sources. These issues include: field size, address formatting and parsing, upper case and lower case, abbreviations, alternate names, alternate spellings (First vs. 1st), missing components and the source of city name. For example, Highway 101, PC HWY, PCH, Pacific Coast Hwy, First Street and 1st St. are all valid alternate street names and types for 1st St. in Encinitas, Calif. This large number of address permutations requires very sophisticated address parsing, standardizing, sorting, matching and scoring algorithms to correctly match raw addresses from two independent databases.

The Savage system does not address the above issues in matching the two raw ABL retrieved addresses to their corresponding two raw addresses on the preferred MapInfo digitized mapping database. The Savage description of the address matching embodiment is: "the central processor will retrieve from the geodata digitized mapping database the routing data correlated to the geographic location addresses". What is needed is a simple, accurate and definable way (such as a Spatial Key) to precisely hierarchically code the address associated with a telephone number and use it as a hierarchical match key to retrieve matching data from other databases coded with all or part of the same hierarchical match key.

In addition, the Savage system does not provide any automated means to determine a servicing location nearby the caller. The caller must know and input the telephone number of the desired service location to get directions. This also eliminates the possibility of providing directions to service locations, such as drop boxes and automatic teller machines (ATMs) that do not have telephones.

Riskin (U.S. Pat. No. 4,757,267) uses the first six digits of the caller's telephone number to select a nearby serving location by performing an on-the-fly calculation to determine the nearness relationship. However, none of the databases mentioned above are accessible by Riskin's process because the first six digits of the telephone number do not provide enough precision to identify the housing or business unit location of the caller.

There are also two previous systems that use a client-specific Caller Telephone Number To a Service Location Telephone Number table as a means of connecting a caller to a servicing location. Cotter (U.S. Pat. No. 4,797,818) describes a manually intensive process for building and maintaining this table. Wegrzynowicz (U.S. Pat. No. 5,136,

636) only references the table as a system component that is built and maintained by the client, but does not describe how the client performs this function.

Neither Savage, Riskin, Cotter, nor Wegrzynowicz use a linkage process similar to the Spatial Key. Further, none of the prior systems mention using a single linkage mechanism as a means to link to multiple databases to support multiple applications.

Developing a Spatial Key

In developing a universal Spatial Key the following must be considered:

1. The stability and updateability of the key over time.
2. The ability of the key to be a unique housing, business and/or postal delivery unit identifier.
3. The geographic hierarchy and precision of the key.
4. The number and quality of updated commercial and public translation tables to and from the key.
5. The availability of tools for third parties to place the key on their files.
6. The ability to precisely associate the key to service locations with service areas of any geographic defined size and shape.
7. The ability of regulated telecommunications entities to code their files with the key and to pass the key outside the regulated portion of the network.

Based On above considerations, there are four primary candidates for the key:

Most recent census block code

Latitude and Longitude

Telephone Number

USPS ZIP Code

The other candidates, such as a voting precinct, are eliminated from discussion because of a lack of precision. Most Recent Census Block Code The Census block code is a hierarchical 15-digit Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) number that is updated once every 10 years in conjunction with the United States decennial census. It has the following seven level hierarchy:

- 2 digit state code
- 3 digit county code
- 4 digit tract code
- 2 digit tract suffix
- 1 digit block group code
- 2 digit block code
- 1 character block part code

The critical limitation of using census block as the Spatial Key is it is not precise enough to act as a unique housing or business unit identifier.

Latitude and Longitude

Latitude and longitude are used in a spherical coordinate system to identify a point on the earth. Its stability in the United States is a function of the North American Datum (NAD) which was originally established by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1927 and was updated in 1983. To use the latitude and longitude as a hierarchical key, the base 10 or binary digits of the latitude and longitude pair must be interleaved to form a single number. The result of this interleaving is generally referred to as a quadtree. Alternatively, the latitude and longitude pair may be combined and/or translated to form another identifier. When latitude and longitude are stored in millionths of degrees, the interleaving creates a nine level base 10 and a sixteen level binary hierarchical system with a mathematical precision of approximately plus or minus 4 inches.

This level of precision is supported by the US Department of Defense's implementation of Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) technology. However, the two primary commer-

cial means by which latitudes and longitudes are assigned to a location, i.e., the TIGER files (NAD27) and commercial level GPS (NAD83), do not support this level of precision. For locations in California, the latitude and longitude coordinates vary by as much as 300 feet between NAD27 and NAD83. There is a mathematical relationship between NAD27 and NAD83, such that latitudes and longitudes can be converted back and forth.

In addition to the above precision issues, latitude and longitude would not make a good choice for a unique housing or business identifier because multi-story buildings require a third coordinate, i.e., elevation. Another limitation with latitude and longitude as a Spatial Key is it requires very specialized Geographic Information System (GIS) databases and knowledge to Spatial Key code. However, commercial level latitude and longitude has no equal when input into a GIS system using data from a single NAD that is indexed by quadtree in showing a relative location on a map with precision in the 30 to 100 foot range.

Telephone Number

The 10 digit telephone number appears to comprise a 20 three level hierarchical system.

3 digit Numbering Plan Area (NPA) or area code

3 digit NXX, exchange or prefix

4 digit line number or suffix. Currently, NPAs do not spatially overlap and, with two minor exceptions, do not cross state boundaries. However, there are current plans to create spatially overlapping NPAs in the future. This will require callers in these NPAs to always dial 10 digits. The next non-spatially overlapping level is not the NXX, but the central office (CO) or wire center (WC). Each CO supports one to a few NXXs. Usually over time, the line numbers associated with a NXX become randomly distributed across the locations of the households and businesses serviced by the CO. There are also NXXs, such as 555, 950 and those assigned to cellular phones and pagers, that have no specific geographic boundaries within the NPA. There are also non-spatial NPAs such as 800, 888 and 900. These above items could cause difficulties in an intelligent call processing system if the telephone number was used as the Spatial Key.

There are several additional deficiencies in using the telephone number as the Spatial Key. These include, for example, the situation of using the telephone number as a unique housing or business unit ID. However, there would be multiple IDs for housing units and businesses with multiple telephone numbers. This would lead to excessive complexity in the system due to the multiple IDs. The main negatives associated with using the telephone number as the Spatial Key are the difficulty of accurately coding other databases with a telephone number and the regulatory issues related to transporting telephone numbers obtained from regulated sources outside the regulated telecommunications network.

USPS ZIP Code

The ZIP Code at the 11 digit level is called the Delivery Point Code (DPC) or ZIP+6 and uniquely identifies an individual building, such as 123 N Main St. The DPC is the most precise geographic code presently supported by the USPS and can be used as a unique housing or business unit identifier for single unit structures. However, it cannot uniquely identify a housing or business unit in multiple unit buildings or firms.

The DPC is a geographic hierarchical numbering system of five levels defined as follows:

3 digit ZIP Code is called a Sectional Center.

5 digit ZIP code is called a Post Office Service Area with a preferred USPS name called the last line name. This is the

name shown on the last line of a mailing address. There are 3 special types of ZIP Codes. Two of these, "Fleet Post Office (FPO)/Armed Forces Post Office (APO)" and "PO Box only", do not have precise spatial definitions, but can be linked to unique household equivalent mailing addresses.

7 digit ZIP Code identifies a geographic sector within a Post Office Service Area.

9 digit ZIP Code is called a ZIP+4 and is usually the geographic area of one side of a street within a single one hundred address range block. It is a unique household level identifier for most USPS' PO Box and RR addresses which usually do not have precise spatial definitions.

11 digit ZIP Code is called the Delivery Point Code or ZIP+6 and uniquely identifies a street number address, such as 123 N Main St. The street address is the most common USPS address and is a unique housing or business unit identifier for all single unit buildings with unique street addresses.

APPLICATIONS

Historically, many high-demand telephone call processing applications have not been commercialized because of one or more technical or economic issues including: automated caller interface technology, integrating telephone and computer networks, and telephone number database validation, coverage, depth and linkages.

In addition, when the above issues are addressed, all known previous efforts in the technology have focused on a custom solution to a specific application, and not on an integrated system solution that meets multiple application needs and the needs of the caller, servicing location and/or vanity number advertiser.

Automated Applications

The following is a partial list of automated application examples that have not either been addressed by previous art or addressed with a highly customized individual solution. It would be desired for all these applications to be automated using a common architecture in which the caller dials a vanity number and the system captures the caller's 10 digit ANI and DNIS. The architecture would only require the caller to respond to application dependent system voice prompts and/or only input a telephone number, if a telephone number different from the ANI is required by the application.

Connecting a caller to a servicing location: The prior technology does not support service locations having service areas of any size and shape, nor situations where geographic precision is required. A solution is desired that provides these abilities in an integrated common architecture.

USPS address retrieval: This is presently addressed by having the caller record their name and address, which is later listened to by a person and transcribed. The transcribed address is then processed through CASS certified software for use in an existing customer database of addresses indexed by telephone number. What is desired is a way to use a caller provided telephone number to directly retrieve the CASS certified USPS address associated with the caller provided telephone number and, in applications requiring 100% accuracy, providing the caller a means to verify the retrieved address. In addition, in a post call process, the retrieved, verified and stored address and additional linked data is desired to be used by the vanity advertiser to mail to the caller, for example, a requested store coupon, menu, catalog or informational packet

The VRU speaks the service location(s) name, address and/or micro directions (to the caller): Service location information is needed by the caller to mail, pickup and/or drop off something to a selected servicing location. The greatest need for micro-area directions to service location (s) is with service locations very small in size, such as Federal Express, UPS and USPS drop boxes, or ATMs located in large physical entities, such as shopping centers or multi-story buildings. A solution is desired that provides these abilities in an integrated common architecture.

The VRU speaks driveable street directions from the caller's location to the selected service location (to the caller). In addition, in a call parallel application, after transferring the call to the servicing location, the application retrieves the service location's FAX number from a Service Location Table and faxes to the service location the caller's telephone number, address and a map and/or directions from the service location to the caller location to assist the servicing location with delivery to caller. The Savage reference describes a application that requires the caller to input two telephone numbers, and the only benefactor to the Savage device is the caller. What is desired is a system that does not require the input of any telephone numbers, or at worst, only one telephone number is provided by the caller. In addition, services would be provided to the caller, servicing location and/or the vanity advertiser.

Eliminating servicing locations based on days and hours of operation and/or services offered: A solution is desired that provides these abilities in an integrated common architecture.

Caller profiling based on Census or geodemographic data: A system is desired, based on a caller's geodemographic code and product consumption rates, to only present product options to the caller that the caller is most likely to buy, or to route the call to an appropriate sales specialist based on the caller's profile.

Applications that require the caller's name and/or individual data such as product registration and insurance, loan or credit applications: What is desired is a way of linking a Spatial Key to a household database containing data, such as name of head of household, street address, number of children in the household and the names of other individuals living in or associated with the household. The system would speak these individual names and the caller would identify himself or herself. Then the system would link to individual data, such as date of birth, credit rating, and so forth, and provide it to the caller, servicing location, and/or vanity advertiser.

Business Location Data Retrieval: What is desired is a way of linking the caller's Spatial Key to a business database containing data, such as name of Business, SIC, Number of employees and DUNS number, which would link directly into the DUNS database for credit information.

Real Property Database Retrieval: What is desired is a way for a contractor, for example, before bidding on a job, to dial a vanity number that interfaces with an automated property database, enter the telephone number of the supposed residential property owner and verify the ownership, address, mortgage holder, and any outstanding liens on the property.

Semi Automated Applications

There are telephone call processing applications where operator decisions and/or assistance are required that can also benefit from a virtual telephone number database. The following are desired exemplary applications:

Address Lookup and verification by an operator taking a telephone order: In current telephone order systems, an

operator key enters a customer's address and verifies the spelling with the caller. What is desired is a way for the caller's telephone number to be passed to the computer system to automatically retrieve the CASS certified address associated with the caller's telephone number and display it on the operator's visual display. The operator would then ask the caller for the address to which they want the order shipped. If the addresses match, the operator would not have to key enter it and verify the spelling with the caller. If the addresses are different, there is a high potential that the caller is trying to make a fraudulent order and the operator would ask additional questions required to make this determination.

Real Time Address to Spatial Key Coding and Spatial Key to Client Table with Off-Line Master Table update: What is desired is a way of continually updating a Master Table (Phone Number to Spatial Key table) that supports multiple clients and applications in the situation when a caller is trying to be connected to a servicing location has provided a valid telephone number that is not in the Master Table.

"911" application: In a real time Public Health and Safety application, the caller places an emergency call to the emergency telephone number "911." The "911" application costs the U.S. taxpayer several billion dollars each year, and is currently overloaded with non-emergency calls. What is needed is a more economical alternative system for non-emergency "911" calls that can alleviate the load from the current overworked system.

A system and method that uses a single Spatial Key to create a virtual telephone number database by linking a caller's or caller provided telephone number to many different and seemingly unrelated databases for supporting multiple applications would be an advance in the industry. What is needed is an automated means to determine a servicing location nearby the caller, such that the caller does not need to know and input the telephone number of the desired service location to get directions or other desired information. This would facilitate providing directions to service locations, such as drop boxes and automatic teller machines (ATMs) that do not have telephones. Such a system would utilize all ten digits of the telephone number to provide enough precision to identify the housing or business unit location of the caller telephone number. What is desired is the integration of VRU technology with a CTI network and a virtual telephone number database to provides a way to support a host of applications that were not previously possible. Information benefits derived by the caller, the servicing location and the vanity advertiser would be made possible by retrieving information from a virtual telephone number database created through Spatial Key linkage technology. Thus, a single linkage mechanism as a way to link to multiple databases to support multiple applications is needed. A solution is desired that provides these abilities in an integrated common architecture.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

The call processing applications examples illustrated above and additional similar applications are satisfied by the present invention that includes a telephone call processing system and method in a CTI network. The present invention also includes a process for building and maintaining a Master Telephone Number to Spatial Key Table for use in a CTI network. A significant factor in this invention is the selection of a Spatial Key type. Several candidates including the Most Recent Census Block Code, Latitude and Longitude, Telephone Number, and USPS ZIP Code may be

considered. Each Spatial Key type candidate has strengths and weaknesses. The extended ZIP code has been selected as the preferred embodiment for use in this invention as described below.

SELECTING A SPATIAL KEY—EXTENDED ZIP CODE

The Delivery Point Code (DPC) or ZIP+6 is the most precise geographic code presently supported by the USPS and can be used as a unique housing or business unit identifier for single unit structures. However, it cannot uniquely identify a housing or business unit in multiple unit buildings or firms. To solve this problem, it is necessary to further subdivide the DPC using the USPS secondary address, such as apartment 2B, to create a unique housing or business unit identifier. The USPS secondary address is stored as an eight character field called the secondary address field in the USPS Address Management System (AMS) II ZIP+4 address coding guide. Appending the secondary address to the end of the DPC results in an extended 19 digit USPS ZIP Code, thereby creating a unique housing unit or business unit identifier.

The extended 19 digit ZIP Code is a six level hierarchical geographic numbering system that uniquely identifies every housing, business and postal delivery unit serviced by the USPS. It is a geographical hierarchical numbering system, because each of the six levels defines a smaller geographic area totally enclosed within the next higher level. Definitions of the first five levels are provided in the Background section. A description of the sixth level is as follows:

19 digit ZIP Code is required to create a unique housing or business unit identifier for multiple unit buildings or equivalents, such as trailer parks or firms receiving large volumes of mail.

The benefits to using the 19 digit ZIP Code as the Spatial Key are:

1. The USPS provides monthly updates to all postal files.
2. The ZIP Code has 6 hierarchical levels.
3. There are very economically priced commercial tools, such as Group 1 and Mailer's Software, that address standardize and assign 11 digit ZIP Codes to files containing raw addresses.
4. Adding the remaining 8 digit code is a fairly basic process for records that require a secondary address to create a unique housing or business unit identifier.
5. There are frequently updated ZIP+4 to latitude and longitude and ZIP+4 to census block translation tables available from the USPS, GDT, Business Location Research (BLR), ETAC and others.
6. There are no technical barriers to creating a DPC to latitude and longitude file if one was required. This would provide the most precise, theatrically possible latitude and longitude assignment of street addresses.
7. There are no restrictions on passing an extended USPS 19 digit ZIP Code outside the regulated telecommunications network because it is not considered customer provided network information.
8. There is a major public safety initiative to change as many RR Box number addresses to street addresses as possible, thus increasing the coverage of the Spatial Keys that can be linked to a precise latitude and longitude.

Although the extended 19 digit ZIP Code is not a perfect universal Spatial Key, it is far superior to the other alternatives for most applications. There are obviously some specific applications where one of the other Spatial Key alternatives could be used. If at some point in the future, the USPS decides to revise the hierarchical numbering system

for the ZIP Code, the new ZIP system would most likely then be the preferred choice for a Spatial Key.

APPLICATIONS

The integration of VRU technology with a CITI network and a virtual telephone number database provides a means to support a host of applications that were not previously possible. The partial list of automated and semi-automated examples below is intended to show the overall scope of the benefits derived by the caller, the servicing location and the vanity advertiser made possible by retrieving information from a virtual telephone number database created through Spatial Key linkage.

Automated Applications

The following is a list of exemplary automated applications that utilize the virtual telephone number database created by the Spatial Key linkage technology.

1. Connecting a caller to a servicing location: This application connects the caller directly to a servicing location retrieved from a Spatial Key indexed Client Table based on the caller provided telephone number being physically located inside the retrieved servicing location's exclusive service area geographically defined as any size or shape. High geographic precision of the location is supported. In cases where the caller provided telephone number is located inside multiple non-exclusive service areas, this application provides the caller a VRU menu of retrieved servicing locations names and then directly connects the caller to the closest servicing location or the one selected by the caller. These abilities and features are provided in a integrated common architecture.
2. USPS address retrieval: This application is based on utilizing the caller or caller provided telephone number to retrieve the caller's CASS certified USPS address. The caller's Spatial Key is linked to the Spatial Key coded and indexed USPS address coding guide and the address is retrieved. The VRU speaks the address back to the caller for confirmation in applications requiring 100% accuracy before linking to any other databases. In addition, in a post call process, the retrieved, verified and stored address and additional linked data can be used by the vanity advertiser to mail to the caller, for example, a requested store coupon, menu, catalog or informational packet.
3. The VRU speaks the service location(s) name, address and/or micro directions (to the caller): Based on a caller provided telephone number, the caller's Spatial Key is used to retrieve location ID(s) of the service location(s) nearest the caller from a Client Table that is associated with the caller's DNIS. The retrieved ID(s) are indexed into the corresponding Service Location table to retrieve the above mentioned information. This can be used by the caller to mail, pickup and/or drop off something to the selected servicing location. Providing the caller with pre-stored micro area directions to the service location(s) is usually used with service locations very small in size, such as Federal Express, UPS and USPS drop boxes, or ATMs located in large physical entities, such as shopping centers or multi-story buildings. These abilities and features are provided in a integrated common architecture.
4. The VRU speaks driveable street directions from the caller's location to the selected service location (to the caller): The caller's Spatial Key is linked to a latitude and longitude which is then fed into a GIS server accessing a latitude and longitude coded and indexed street network database. The database provides a set of directions that are spoken by the VRU. The caller does not need to enter either the source (under normal circumstances) or desti-

- nation location telephone numbers. In a call parallel application: after transferring the call to the servicing location, the application retrieves the service location's FAX number from a Service Location Table and faxes to the service location the caller's telephone number, address and a map and/or directions from the service location to the caller location to assist the servicing location with delivery to caller. In this case, the GIS server returns the direction data in the form of a map and/or directions and passes this image to the FAX server.
5. Eliminating servicing locations based on days and hours of operation and/or services offered: In the case of multiple servicing locations, the final servicing location list is determined by comparing the days and hours of operation of each service location retrieved from the Service Location table with the day and time of the call. Another method involves having the caller select a pickup or delivery option, (for pizza, for example) and eliminating servicing locations from the list that are not currently open or do not offer the desired service. These abilities and features are provided in a integrated common architecture.
 6. Caller profiling based on Census or geodemographic data: The caller provided telephone number is linked to a census block or block group database. The Census Block database contains demographic data, such as race, age, median household size and so forth, or a single numeric geodemographic code that is a composite of the census information which links into a geodemographic code by a product consumption table. Based on the caller's geodemographic code and its product consumption rates, the VRU only presents product options to the caller that the caller is most likely to buy. There are also geodemographic systems that use the ZIP+4 as the base geography instead of the census block.
 7. Applications that require the caller's name and/or individual data such as product registration and insurance, loan or credit applications: The caller provided telephone number is linked to a household database containing data, such as name of head of household, street address, number of children in the household and the names of other individuals living in or associated with the household. The VRU can speak these individual names and the caller can identify himself or herself. After the step of identification by name, individual IDs associated with the selected name and stored in the database, such as social security number, state drivers license number, credit card number (s) and bank account number(s), can then be used as a linkage to link to individual ID-indexed databases containing individual data, such as date of birth, credit rating, and so forth. This information can then be provided to the caller, servicing location or vanity advertiser.
 8. Business Location Data Retrieval: The caller provided telephone number is linked to a business containing data, such as name of Business, SIC, Number of employees and DUNS number, which links directly into the DUNS database for credit information. The applications here are very similar to the applications for a household database.
 9. Real Property Database Retrieval: Most real property databases are maintained by local government agencies and the data stored in these databases is considered public information. This data is compiled from the public agencies by companies, such as ACXIOM DATAQUICK, and made available to paying clients. Before bidding on a job, for example, a contractor could dial a vanity number that interfaces with an automated property database, enter the telephone number of the supposed residential property

owner and verify the ownership, address, mortgage holder and if there are any outstanding liens on the property.

Semi Automated Applications

There are telephone call processing applications where operator decisions and/or assistance are required that can also benefit from a virtual telephone number database. The following are examples:

1. Address Lookup and verification by an operator taking a telephone order: The caller's ANI is passed to the computer system via Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) to which the operator's CRT is connected or the operator asks the caller for the telephone number and key enters it. The host computer passes the caller's telephone number over the computer network to the computer storing the Master Table of telephone numbers with corresponding Spatial Keys and the Spatial Key coded USPS National Address database and requests the address associated with the caller's telephone number. This CASS certified address is returned and displayed on the operator's CRT. The operator then asks the caller for the address to which they want the order shipped. If the addresses match, the operator does not have to key enter it and verify the spelling with the caller. This saves both time and money and reduces mistakes. If the addresses are different, there is a high potential that the caller is trying to make a fraudulent order and the operator would ask additional questions required to make this determination.
2. Real Time Address to Spatial Key Coding and Spatial Key to Client Table with Off-Line Master Table update: A caller is trying to be connected to a servicing location and has provided a valid telephone number that is not in the Master Table. The call is transferred to an exceptions handling operator and the telephone number and DNIS are passed via ISDN to the operator's host computer and displayed on the operator's CRT. The operator asks for the caller's address and key enters it. The operator then presses a function key that calls a program that USPS standardizes the address and assigns a Spatial Key. The operator validates the standardized address with the caller. If it validates, the operator then presses another function key that passes the Spatial Key and the DNIS to a program that brings up a list of servicing location(s) with their telephone numbers on the CRT screen. The operator then asks the caller which one they prefer and transfers the call by highlighting the selected service location and pressing another function key. The captured telephone number and Spatial Key are stored on disk or other mass storage and are retrieved later by another process that updates the Master Table which supports multiple clients and applications.
3. "911" application: In a real time Public Health and Safety applications, the caller places an emergency call to the emergency telephone number "911." The caller's telephone number is passed by Caller ID to the answering hardware which passes the information via ISDN to a Geographic Information System (GIS) computer with large CRT graphic terminals in front of dispatching operators. The system looks up the caller's Spatial Key in a Master Table and then looks up the caller's latitude and longitude in a Spatial Key to Latitude and Longitude table and the caller's address from the Spatial Key coded and indexed USPS address coding guide. The caller's location is then displayed in the map window on the answering dispatcher's CRT along with the street network and the current location of all emergency vehicles by type and status. The caller's address is displayed in the address window. Based on the type of emergency and the current

location and status of the emergency vehicles, the dispatcher determines which vehicle(s) to dispatch and when they should be dispatched.

The call processing system includes means for receiving network provided call information or means for prompting and receiving optional caller provided input to capture a valid first location telephone number. The call processing system further includes a process for indexing the valid first location telephone number into at least one Master Telephone Number to Spatial Key database to retrieve information associated with the first location's telephone number and a means to provide the received and retrieved information associated with the first location's telephone number to provide one or more improvements to the service of at least one call recipient.

The improvements in service are provided to one or more of the following recipients: a caller, a servicing location and/or a vanity number advertiser. These improvements in service or benefits are provided either during the call, parallel to the call, and/or post call. The service benefits include the following: determining the selected servicing location telephone number and providing it to the network to automatically connect the caller to the selected servicing location; determining that the caller requires operator assistance and providing the network with the information required to connect the caller to a vanity advertiser operator; and/or providing one of a plurality of informational items.

The improvements in service illustrated in the application examples all relate to a consumer or business dialing a business or government vanity number. However, at some future point in time, the CTI network will evolve to where the called party can also be a consumer. At this future point in time, the called consumer can have access to all the information related to the calling telephone that the servicing locations and vanity advertisers have in the above examples, such as having the name, address, caller type (consumer, business, pay phone or government, etc.) associated with the calling telephone displayed on his or her future-generation caller ID box before he or she answers the telephone.

The preferred process uses the full 10 digits of the North American Dialing Plan 10 digit telephone number as the telephone number. Obviously, if the system were implemented within a single NPA with no overlapping NPAs, a 7 digit number could easily be substituted by one skilled in the art. Also, if at some point in the future, the North American dialing plan were revised or replaced with another plan, the process would still function the same way with a different number of digits.

The call processing system includes a process for validating the received telephone number. This process includes at least one of the following: verifying the telephone number is ten digits in length, only contains the numbers 0 through 9, and digits one and four are the numbers 2 through 9 inclusive; comparing the received NPANXX against an Area Code Split File and updating the received NPANXX; indexing the received NPANXX against a Local Exchange Routing Guide (LERG) file and determining the validity of the received NPANXX-XXXX; and comparing the received NPANXX against a V&H coordinate file to determine the type of NPANXX and the location of the NPANXX.

The Master Telephone Number to Spatial Key database is a Virtual Telephone Number database created via Spatial Key linkage. It is created by combining a Master Telephone Number to Spatial Key database with a Spatial Key indexed database. The invention also includes a set of processes to maintain the Master Telephone Number to Spatial Key

database: a process for data providers to provide Master Table Verification Records; a process to Build Master Table Update Records from Data Provider Supplied Verification Records; a Master Table Update preprocess; and a Master Table Update process.

The Spatial Key indexed database includes one of the following: Spatial database, Geographic database, USPS Address database, Household database, Individual database linked to a Household database, Business Locations database, Business Financial database linked to a Business Locations database, Government locations database, Property database, Client Table, or Service Locations Table linked to a Client Table.

The call processing system is designed in a modular manner to support many different clients or advertisers with many different applications. The set of system modules required to satisfy a specific client application is generally only a subset of the total system capabilities. These individual primary modules are summarized below. They include providing a means for:

1. Spatial Key database coding and maintenance.
2. Providing caller communication with a CTI network.
3. Capturing and validating the caller provided telephone number and the vanity number dialed.
4. Linking the captured telephone number to a Spatial Key via a Master Telephone Number to Spatial Key table.
5. Linking the Spatial Key to Spatial Key coded and/or indexed spatial, geographic, USPS address, household, individual, property, business location, government location record databases to retrieve data associated with the caller.
6. Linking the Caller's Spatial Key to service location ID(s) or telephone number(s) stored in a pre-built and Spatial Key coded and indexed Client Table associated with the vanity number dialed (DNIS).
7. Linking the servicing location ID(s) or telephone number(s) retrieved from the Client Table to other service location specific data stored in a Service Locations table associated with the vanity number dialed and indexed by ID or telephone number.
8. Connecting the caller to an exceptions handling operator or system.
9. Spatially relating, in the form of a map or directions, the caller provided telephone number location with the selected servicing location.
10. Connecting or transferring the caller to a servicing location.
11. Storing selected call information to be accessed later by the caller, the servicing location, and/or the vanity advertiser.
12. Providing call, call parallel and/or post call information to the caller relating to the servicing location and/or the spatial relationship between the servicing location and the location of the caller provided telephone number.
13. Providing the caller with a post call communications.
14. Providing call, call parallel and/or post call information to the vanity number advertiser and the servicing location(s) regarding the ANI, DNIS, caller provided telephone number and corresponding Spatial Key, and data retrieved or processed from databases using the Spatial Key as a linkage means.
15. Providing the vanity number advertiser and servicing locations post call communications.

One aspect of the present invention includes a method of creating a database for use with a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, the method comprising providing a master table comprising a plurality of records, each of said

records comprises a telephone number and an associated spatial key of a potential caller; providing a spatial key to information database comprising a plurality of records, each of said records comprises a spatial key and associated information; performing a computerized analysis of the spatial keys in the master table and the spatial keys in the spatial key to information database; and linking records in the master table with records in the spatial key to information database according to the computerized analysis.

Another aspect of the present invention includes a method of creating a database for use with a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, the method comprising providing a master table comprising a plurality of records, wherein at least one record includes a telephone number and an associated spatial key of a potential caller; providing a spatial key to information database comprising a plurality of records, wherein at least one record has a spatial key and information associated with the spatial key of the potential caller; and linking the master table with the spatial key to information database.

Another aspect of the present invention includes a method of creating a database for use with a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, the method comprising providing a master table comprising a plurality of records, wherein at least one record includes a telephone number and an associated spatial key of a potential caller; providing a spatial key indexed database comprising a plurality of records, wherein at least one record has a spatial key and information associated with the spatial key of the potential caller; and linking the master table with the spatial key indexed database.

Another aspect of the present invention includes a method of creating a database for use with a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, the method comprising providing a master table comprising a plurality of records, wherein each record comprises a telephone number and an associated spatial key of a potential caller; providing a spatial key translation index comprising a plurality of records, wherein each record comprises a spatial key and a secondary index; providing a secondary index to information database comprising a plurality of records, wherein each record comprises a secondary index and associated information; performing a computerized translation of the spatial keys in the master table to secondary indices utilizing the records in the spatial key translation index; and linking records in the master table with records in the secondary index to information database in accordance with the computerized translation.

Another aspect of the present invention includes, in a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, a call processing system, comprising a master telephone number associated information database, wherein said master database comprises a plurality of records, at least one record having a telephone number of a potential caller and associated data; a call decoder capable of capturing a telephone number of a first location; a routing processor capable of indexing the telephone number of the first location into the master telephone number associated information database to retrieve information associated with the telephone number of the first location; and a voice response unit being capable of communicating the retrieved information associated with the telephone number of the first location to at least one recipient comprising a vanity number advertiser, the caller or a servicing location.

Another aspect of the present invention includes a method of call processing for use in a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network including a master telephone number associated information database, the method comprising

capturing a telephone number of a first location; indexing the telephone number of the first location into the master telephone number associated information database, said master database having a plurality of records, at least one record including a telephone number of a potential caller and associated data; retrieving information associated with the indexed telephone number from the master database; and communicating the retrieved information associated with the telephone number to at least one recipient selected from a vanity number advertiser, the caller, or a servicing location.

Yet another aspect of the present invention includes, in a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, a call processing system, comprising a master table of telephone numbers with spatial keys; a voice response unit (VRU) capable of capturing a first location telephone number; a validation module capable of validating the captured telephone number; a retrieve spatial key module capable of indexing the validated first location telephone number into the master table and retrieving the spatial key of the first location's telephone number; a retrieve spatial key dependent data processor that indexes the retrieved spatial key into at least one spatial key indexed database to retrieve, by spatial key linkage, information associated with the telephone number of the first location; and a communication processor capable of communicating the retrieved information associated with the telephone number of the first location to at least one recipient selected from a vanity number advertiser, a caller or a servicing location.

Another aspect of the present invention includes, in a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, a call processing system, comprising a master telephone number associated information database; a voice response unit (VRU) capable of capturing a telephone number of a first location; a retrieve spatial key module capable of indexing the first location telephone number into the master database and retrieving information associated with the telephone number of the first location; and a communication processor capable of communicating the retrieved information associated with the telephone number of the first location to at least one recipient comprising a vanity number advertiser, a caller or a servicing location.

Still another aspect of the present invention includes, in a Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) network, a call processing system, comprising a master telephone number associated information database, wherein said master database comprises a plurality of records, at least one record having a telephone number of a potential caller; an interactive voice response (IVR) unit capable of capturing a telephone number of a first location; a retrieve spatial key module that indexes the telephone number of the first location into the master telephone number associated information database to retrieve information associated with the telephone number of the first location; and a communication processor capable of communicating the retrieved information associated with the telephone number of the first location to at least one recipient comprising a vanity number advertiser, the caller or a servicing location.

These features of the present invention will become more fully apparent from the following description and appended claims taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a high-level conceptual diagram illustrating multiple databases linked together via a Spatial Key to create a Virtual Telephone Number database;

FIG. 2 is a network diagram illustrating a preferred network design for utilizing the databases of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of the call processing center 213 of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of the remote database location 231 of FIG. 2;

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of the telecommunications network 212 of FIG. 2 illustrating different call routing alternatives;

FIG. 6 is a system level flow diagram of a presently preferred Call Center Call process using the databases shown in FIG. 1 and the network shown in FIG. 2;

FIG. 7 is a flow diagram illustrating the process of validating and adding intelligence to an input telephone number by retrieving information from the telephone number indexed databases indicated at function 308 in FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is a flow diagram illustrating the Spatial Key retrieval and verification of caller dependent Spatial Key Data process indicated at 320 in FIG. 6;

FIG. 9 is a flow diagram of a process for communicating with a caller or servicing location using the Parallel Call process as indicated at 330 in FIG. 6;

FIG. 10 is a flow diagram of a process for generating a CASS certified address from a Spatial Key for use in the databases indicated at 106 in FIG. 1;

FIG. 11A is a block diagram of a process for a data provider to provide Master Table verification records;

FIG. 11B is a block diagram of a process for building Master Table update records from data provider supplied verification records;

FIG. 11C is a block diagram of a Master Table Update preprocess;

FIG. 11D is a block diagram of a Master Table Update process;

FIG. 12 is a flow diagram illustrating the Phone Number Sort, Match and Append process as indicated at 422 in FIG. 11B;

FIG. 13 is a flow diagram of the process for reading a LERG file as indicated at function 606 in FIG. 12;

FIG. 14 is a flow diagram of the process for reading a Data Provider Verification file as indicated at function 610 in FIG. 12;

FIG. 15 is a flow diagram of the process for incrementing a LERG List as indicated at function 618 in FIG. 12;

FIG. 16 is a flow diagram of the process for writing an Invalid Telephone Number file as indicated at function 630 in FIG. 12;

FIGS. 17A and 17B are a flow diagram illustrating the ZIP+6 and Unit Number Sort, Expand, Match and Append process as indicated at 432 in FIG. 11B; FIGS. 18A, 18B and 18C are a flow diagram illustrating the Master Table Update process as indicated at 456 in FIG. 11D;

FIG. 19 is a flow diagram of the process for reading a Data Provider Updates database as indicated at function 836 in FIG. 18C;

FIG. 20 is a flow diagram of the process for reading the Master Table as indicated at function 838 in FIG. 18C; and

FIG. 21 is a flow diagram of the process for writing an Updated Master Table as indicated at function 846 in FIG. 18C.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The following detailed description of the preferred embodiments presents a description of certain specific

embodiments of the present invention. However, the present invention can be embodied in a multitude of different ways as defined and covered by the claims. In this description, reference is made to the drawings wherein like parts are designated with like numerals throughout.

For convenience, the discussion of the preferred embodiments will be organized into the following principal sections:

I. Virtual Telephone Number Database Description

II. CTI Network Description and Functionality

III. Call Center Call Processing System

IV. CASS Certified Address Build

V. Master Table Build and Maintenance Description

I. Virtual Telephone Number Database Description

FIG. 1 illustrates how a telephone number can be enhanced with almost an unlimited amount of attribute data. Traditionally, for most clients and their telecommunications call processing applications, telephone number databases have either not been available, contained only bare telephone numbers with standard telecommunications network call detail report data, such as time and length of call, or contained only a few previous caller or customer records with limited amounts of manually captured and recorded telephone number attribute data.

FIG. 1 shows many different types of database in an outer database ring 101 with their corresponding Spatial Key Linkage Translation indices shown in a middle ring 103. Three of the database types (106, 108 and 110, and 112 and 114) do not have a corresponding Translation index because they are indexed by a Spatial Key making the Translation index unnecessary. For descriptive purposes, a Spatial Key indexed database is defined to be any database that is accessed directly via the Spatial Key or indirectly through a Spatial Key Translation index.

Referring to FIG. 1, a functional flow using Spatial Key linkage technology will be described. A caller's or caller provided telephone number and a DNIS are passed to a process for updating, validating, classifying, and screening that utilizes a set of Telephone Number Databases Indexed by Telephone Number 100. This process is further described in conjunction with FIG. 7 hereinbelow. The resultant processed telephone number is used to access a Phone Number to Spatial Key or Master Table 102 to retrieve a Spatial Key 104. The Spatial Key 104 is then used to directly access data in the databases (e.g., 106, 108 and 110, and 112 and 114) that do not require a translation index. Otherwise, the Spatial Key is used by a translation index to retrieve a secondary index (e.g., voting district ID from index 128) for accessing databases (e.g., 118, 122, 126, 130, 134) requiring a translation index. The resultant database information, the caller's telephone number and the DNIS are then used to connect the caller to a servicing location and/or provide service location related information.

The Telephone Number to Spatial Key Translation index 102 (Master Table) could be combined with the Spatial Key indexed databases by an offline merge, append and/or link process to create telephone number indexed databases containing all of the above illustrated information. These combined master telephone number indexed database(s) would obviously be more maintenance intensive because of the magnitude of the offline maintenance required to synchronize telephone number changes, client service location changes and maintaining the spatial relationship between the telephone number and each client's service locations, but such combined databases would provide slightly faster data access times.

FIG. 1 illustrates a one-way linkage starting with a telephone number. Referring to FIG. 1, one skilled in the art could see the Spatial Key linkage technology could be used for applications that do not start with a telephone number. In another embodiment, for example, by starting with a client location instead of a telephone number, one could generate a list of all telephone numbers of potential customers serviced by the selected location. In yet another embodiment, by starting with a name and address, one could determine the telephone number(s) for that address and the other individuals living at that address. This is a directory assistance type of application.

The specifics for each database type (of FIG. 1) in terms of data components, sources, Spatial Key coding and maintenance issues will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Telephone Number Databases Indexed By Telephone Number (100, FIG. 1) There are three types of databases that fall within this category: Telephone number changes, verification and classification databases; client specific customer databases; and negative or inverse lists. These databases must all be updated monthly and synchronized to a given date in the month. The 15th of the month is the preferred date, but any day could be selected.

Regarding telephone number changes, verification and classification, the official source is Bellcore. They publish a variety of publicly available files, with the most comprehensive being the Local Exchange Routing Guide (LERG) files and their derivatives. Bellcore releases files on a monthly basis. The date that NPANXXs change, are added or are deleted is provided with the files. The files must be updated monthly to coordinate the changes that will occur in the following month.

The Telephone Number Databases Indexed by Telephone Number generally indicated at 100 (FIG. 1) comprise several files, lists, or databases. The preferred databases 100 include a NPANXX Split file, a LERG6 file, a V&H Coordinate file, one or more Customer databases, and a Negative database. These databases will be described in conjunction with FIG. 7, along with a process 308 (FIG. 7) of adding intelligence to the input telephone number by retrieving information from these telephone number indexed databases during the call. This process can be considered a detailed expansion of block 100 (FIG. 1). Other databases may be utilized in other embodiments.

Telephone Number to Spatial Key (Master Table) (102, FIG. 1)

The completeness, currency and accuracy of the Master Table is the key to the efficiency and functionality of all applications. In order to build and maintain the most complete, current and accurate Master Table possible, the table must be created from multiple sources. In addition, since the Master Table is designed to be used by both regulated and non-regulated entities in the regulated telephone network, none of the Master Table data can be customer provided network information.

There are four separate processes to build and maintain the Master Table. These process are as follows:

1. Process for Data Provider to Provide Master Table Verification Records (FIG. 11A)
2. Process to Build Master Table Update Records from Data Provider Supplied Verification Records (FIG. 11B)
3. Master Table Update Preprocess (FIG. 11C)
4. Master Table Update Process (FIG. 11D)

These Master Table build and maintenance processes are further described hereinbelow.
Spatial Key (104, FIG. 1)

The preferred Spatial Key is the 19 digit code used to link databases together.

USPS Address Databases Indexed By Spatial Key (106, FIG. 1)

There are two USPS databases required to build a USPS CASS certified address from a Spatial Key: a City State file and a ZIP+4 Address Coding Guide. There is one City State detail record for each 5 digit ZIP code and one or more ZIP+4 Addresses Coding Guide records for each unique ZIP+4. The ZIP+4 Address Coding Guide contains multiple records in a situation where there is a multiple set of secondary address ranges associated with a single ZIP+4. The use of these two USPS databases to build a USPS CASS certified address from a Spatial Key will be described in conjunction with FIG. hereinbelow.

Business and Government Location Databases Indexed By Spatial Key containing DUNS Number (108 FIG. 1)

A preferred Business and Government Locations File 108 is a DUNS file. The ten million plus record file contains a business or government name and both a physical and mailing address, if they are not both the same. Each address is run through DPC coding software, as described in process 402 of FIG. 11A, and an 11digit ZIP Code is assigned. If the address contains a secondary address, such as a Suite #, then it is reformatted into an eight digit field according to the rules described in process 432 of FIG. 11B. If there is no secondary address, the last eight digits are set to all blank characters. The 11 digit segment and the eight digit segment are concatenated together to form the 19 digit Spatial Key, and a file index is created on this key.

It is now a basic process to look up a Spatial Key in the file and retrieve the location record data associated with the Spatial Key, including the location's DUNS number and its parent's DUNS number if the location is owned by a higher level corporate entity.

Business Database Indexed By DUNS Number (110, FIG. 1) The DUNS' numbers retrieved above (database 108) can then be used to access a DUNS Corporate database 110 to obtain names of corporate officers and credit history information. This is very valuable in many types of business to business transactions.

Household Databases Indexed By Spatial Key containing Individual Names and IDs (Social Security Number) (112, FIG. 1)

A preferred Household database 112 is ACXION's OMNIBASE database. This 100 million plus record database is Spatial Key coded and indexed as described above. For each household record it contains many household characteristics, such as name of head of household, date of birth of head of household, estimated household income, and so forth. It also links to 265 million individuals known to be associated with one or more households. For each individual, the database contains their name, date of birth, social security number, driver's license number and other similar data.

It is a straightforward process to look up a Spatial Key in the OMNIBASE database and retrieve the associated household and individual data. Another application that is conducive to hierarchical Spatial Key retrieval from the database is a nearest neighbor application.

Individual Databases Indexed By Individual ID (Social Security Number) (114, FIG. 1) There are three major individual databases 114 that are indexed by social security number: TRW, Equifax and TransUnion (TU). The preferred database is the TU database. Once an individual's social security number has been retrieved from above (database 112), it is a basic process to use the social security number

as a means of retrieving credit and public record data associated with the social security number from the TU database.

Polk and some states provide access into their driver license databases based on knowing a driver's license number. Again, once this is retrieved from database 112 above, it is a basic process to access this data. This data contains driving history, and in some cases, linkage to vehicle registration data. An automobile make and model associated with the household and individuals can be retrieved from the vehicle registration data.

Spatial Key to Parcel Number (116, FIG. 1)

A Spatial Key to Parcel Number Translation index 116 is created by ACXIOM by extracting property address, owner address and parcel number from the DATAQUICK database. The parcel number is usually the FIPS Code of a local government entity responsible for managing title and/or property taxes to real property plus the locally assigned parcel number. The addresses are Spatial Key coded as previously described and the Parcel Number Translation database is created with the following fields and indexed by Spatial Key:

Spatial Key

Parcel Number (government entity code+local parcel number)

Spatial Key Type Code (O=Owner or P=Parcel)

It is a straightforward process to index a Spatial Key into this Translation database and retrieve all parcel numbers associated with the Spatial Key.

Property Database Indexed By Parcel Number (118, FIG. 1)

The ACXIOM DATAQUICK database is indexed by parcel number based on parcel number(s) retrieved above from index 116. Information, such as owner, liens, mortgage amount, mortgage lender, purchase date is available for the individual parcel or all the parcels associated with the owner's tax address.

Spatial Key to Latitude and Longitude (120 FIG. 1)

A preferred Spatial Key to Latitude and Longitude database 120 is the GDT ZIP+4 to Latitude and Longitude file. This database is currently updated quarterly. Latitude and longitude are provided in NAD27 in millionths of a degree. Each record also contains the USPS ZIP+4 type and the precision with which that latitude and longitude were assigned: ZIP+4 centroid, ZIP+2 centroid or ZIP centroid. There are approximately 28 million street, firm and high-rise ZIP+4s that have been latitude and longitude coded to their ZIP+4 centroid by matching against enhanced TIGER files called DYNAMAP®, available from Geographic Data Technology, Inc. (GDT). This file is indexed by ZIP+4 and it is a straightforward process to lookup a ZIP+4 on the file and retrieve the latitude and longitude associated with the ZIP+4.

In the not too distant future, a ZIP+6 to Latitude and Longitude file will most likely become available. At that point in time, with all other issues being equal, it would become the preferred translation file and could be incorporated into the system without any modifications other than changing the size of the key from 9 digits to 11 digits.

Spatial Databases Indexed By Latitude and Longitude Quadtree (122, FIG. 1)

There are many types of Spatial databases 122 available from many different sources. In general, they are classified into 0-D, 1-D and 2-D databases and networks. The terms 0-D, 1-D and 2-D correspond to the number of dimensions: a zero dimensional database contains points such as the latitude and longitude point where two or more street segments intersect; a one dimensional database is a database

of line segments, e.g., two latitude and longitude points connected by a straight line, such as the street segment connecting one intersection to the next intersection; and a two dimensional database is a database of areas defined by polygons or circles, such as a census block defined by a three or more point latitude and longitude polygon boundary. A general definition of a GIS or spatial network is a system to link related 0-D, 1-D and 2-D databases together. For example, the GIS network provides the means to know what other street links connect to a starting street link, what other links or points the link crosses, and what areas the link borders or crosses. A spatial database is not like other databases and has three components: the spatial data, the spatial network and a spatial data network interface or application program interface (API).

Consequently, there are many different proprietary spatial database network designs with various strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, spatial data cannot always be moved from one network design to another without some distortion, and there is no "best" spatial database and network for all applications.

Fortunately, from an API perspective, almost all spatial database systems will accept one or more 0-D, 1-D, and/or 2-D latitude and longitude defined inputs and return a result that can be easily handled by the calling application. For example, in the area of driveable street directions and maps, the preferred spatial database system is from ETAC which specializes in automobile navigation systems. In most major markets, ETAC has enhanced the TIGER files by classifying streets by type, identifying one way streets and streets with no right or left turn restrictions. ETAC's street information, network design and API were created primarily to provide driving directions in the form of text or various resolution street maps stored as bitmaps. This makes ETAC a clear supplier for GIS applications related to providing driveable directions and street maps.

On the other hand, in terms of general spatial database processing platforms supported and spatial database manipulation, Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI®) in Redlands, California has no equal to its ARC/INFO product. Many spatial database providers such as GDT provide their spatial data in ARC/INFO format, as well as formats to support SMI and MapInfo.

There are many specialized spatial database suppliers. For example, Vista Environmental provides 0-D and 2-D environmental data for underground storage tank locations, hazardous waste spill locations, hazardous material storage locations and hazardous material dump site areas. There are other spatial database providers that have spatial databases of shopping centers, financial institutions with deposits, restaurants by type, ATMs, drop boxes, fire hydrants, flood planes, earthquake fault lines, power lines and so forth.

Information from all these databases is now accessible by simply passing a latitude and longitude definition, an information request and a returned information format request to the GIS API.

Spatial Key to FIPS Code (124, FIG. 1)

A preferred Spatial Key to FIPS Code (census block) database 124 is a GDT ZIP+4 to 1990 Census Block file. This file is currently updated quarterly. The ZIP+4 can change monthly, while the census blocks change only with each decennial census.

This file is indexed by ZIP+4 and it is a straightforward process to look up a ZIP+4 on the file and retrieve the census block associated with the ZIP+4. In a very small percentage of cases, there can be two or more census blocks associated with a ZIP+4.

Census Geography Databases Indexed By FIPS Code (126, FIG. 1)

In terms of Census Geography databases 126, there are four different types: most recent census data, updates and projections, geodemographic systems and other data reported by census geography.

The preferred source for the most recent (e.g., 1990) census small geographic area data is the U.S. Census Bureau. They publish two sets of small area data files called the Summary Tape Files (STF). These files are divided into two groups: 100% count data, published as STF1 data and sample data, published as STF3 data. STF1 data is available for each of the 6.3 million census blocks and higher level geographies. Each geography record contains several hundred demographic variables, such as population counts by race and age and household counts by property value. The STF3 files are published for the 223 thousand census block groups and higher level geographies. Each geography record contains an additional several hundred demographic variables, such as average household income and counts of head of households by age and by income.

In terms of updates and projections, there are two major suppliers with equal reputations: Claritas and Equifax National Decision Systems. These suppliers provide current year estimates and five years projections for population, households, population by age, households by income, head of household age by income and other data for block group geography and above.

Again, both Claritas and Equifax National Decision Systems provide geodemographic systems. A geodemographic system is a classification system where each geographic area is classified into a single code based on the demographic and other characteristics associated with the geographic unit. There are usually between 40 and 100 unique sequential numeric codes in a geodemographic system. These systems were initially available for only census geography, but are now available for both census geography and postal geography. The value of the system is that there are individual company customer databases and syndicated panel databases containing as many as 50,000 panel members from suppliers such as Simmons, National Panel Data (NPD) and Mediamark Research Institute (MRI). Based on the customer or panel member address, they are assigned a geodemographic code. These customers or panel members have purchased products or filled out questionnaires on products and services. These panel databases are tabulated by geodemographic code and by product creating geodemographic consumption propensity tables of several thousand products and/or services with purchasing rates by geodemographic code. This data is readily accessible by looking up a FIPS code in a census geography database and retrieving the geodemographic code. Then by looking up the geodemographic code in the geodemographic consumption propensity table, the consumption propensity for the desired product or service can be retrieved.

There are special databases that are provided by government agencies such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Company (FDIC). The FDIC requires all FDIC controlled lending institutions to report all applications for home mortgage loans by age, race, loan amount, loan status and the census tract of applicant property. The FDIC publishes this data in an electronic form on a quarterly basis. This data is tabulated by census tract and provided by companies such as Claritas and Equifax.

All the above-mentioned data is readily accessible by looking up a FIPS code in a Census Geography database and retrieving the desired dependent data.

Spatial Key to other ID (128, FIG. 1)

In addition to census geography codes and latitude and longitudes, the TIGER files also containing voting precinct codes and school district codes for each street link. The same process used by GDT and others to create a ZIP+4 to Census Block file can also be used to create a ZIP+4 to Voting Precinct file and a ZIP+4 to School District file, for example. These files have not previously been created because of lack of demand. However, there will most likely be a ZIP+4 to Voting Precinct file available from GDT prior to a general election. By indexing this file by ZIP+4, it is a straight forward process to look up a ZIP+4 on the file and retrieve the voting precinct associated with the ZIP+4.

Other Geography Database Such as Voting District Indexed By Voting District ID (130, FIG. 1)

There are statistical summary files from governmental agencies that provide the number of registered voters by party and by voting precinct. For example, as a general election gets closer, both parties and news agencies will seek public opinion on various issues and candidates. Using a 800 or 900 number, callers placing votes can be tabulated in real time and the caller's precinct dependent data can be looked up and statistically modeled to provide national level estimates and voting statistics by party.

Spatial Key to Location ID (DNIS Dependent Client Table) (132 FIG. 1) This translation table is called a Client Table 132 and the procedure for building it is described in detail in Applicant's patent entitled "Automatic Routing System for Telephonic Services", U.S. Pat. No. 5,506,897, which is hereby incorporated by reference. In summary, a Client Table record is created for each ZIP+4 that spatially lies inside a service location's service area defined as a geographic area of any size and shape. This process is repeated for each service area and the resultant file is sorted and indexed by ZIP+4 creating the Client Table. The Client Table can be indexed by ZIP+4 to retrieve a service location ID. There is one Client Table per Client that is identified by the DNIS.

Client Locations Databases With Services Areas of Any Size or Shape Indexed by Location ID (134, FIG. 1)

These are basic "one record per service location" databases 134 indexed by Location ID. They can contain almost any type of service location data, such as, but not limited to, the following: name, address, latitude/longitude, service area type and latitude/longitude definition, telephone number, FAX number, E-Mail address, days and hours open, micro area directions, store promotions and events, and store product inventories or menus and prices. There is one Client Locations database 134 per client that is identified by DNIS.

II. CTI Network Description and Functionality

CTI Network Major Components

Referring to FIG. 2, a CTI network 200 is composed of five Major components:

1. Caller locations, such as 202, 204;
2. Servicing locations, such as 246, 248, 250;
3. National Telecommunications Network 212;
4. Call Processing Center 213; and
5. Remote Database Processing Center 231.

The CTI network 200 is used to provide service and information to the caller at a calling location (e.g., 202 or 204), servicing location (e.g., 246 or 248) and/or vanity number advertiser (not shown). The vanity number advertiser can be considered to be any entity that has advertised, published and/or owns the rights to the dialed number. The calling locations are connected to the National Telecommunications Network 212 by one or more lines 210 (to each calling location), which may be a single public switched

telecommunications network (PSTN) line, multiple lines, an ISDN line (that can carry voice and data), a cellular or personal communications service (PCS) link, a microwave connection, a satellite link, and so forth. The network 212 is linked to the call processing center 213 by a plurality of bidirectional channels. These channels include connections to a VRU 214, one or more routing processors 226, a fax server 238, a modem server 240 and an Internet server 242. The network 212 is further connected to a plurality of service locations by one or more lines 244 (to each service location). These lines 244 are of similar types enumerated above in conjunction with the calling lines 210.

The call processing center 213 includes a plurality of databases as will be described below. One or more of these databases may be located at a remote database location 231. A gateway 230 at the center 213 enables connection via a bidirectional channel to the remote database center 231.

A telephone call that initiates at a calling location may be routed through the network 212 by use of the call processing center 213 and/or information about a caller, servicing location or advertiser may be provided to the caller, servicing location, or advertiser through the network 212 by use of the center 213. The call processing center 213 provides the intelligence of where the call is to be routed or the information to be provided to the caller, servicing location and/or vanity advertiser. The network 212 receives this data and acts on it as directed by the center 213. The center 213 may optionally access databases at a remote location, such as at remote database center 231. The network 212, the center 213 and the remote location 231 will be further described hereinbelow.

Caller Locations

All caller locations, e.g., 202, 204, must have a telephone such as telephone 205. The telephone can either be a Touchtone, a rotary telephone, or an emulated telephone. With a Touchtone telephone, the caller is able to provide input via the telephone key pad using Dual Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) or by voice. With the rotary telephone, input is limited to voice. There are numerous Touchtone and rotary telephone manufacturers. The Touchtone phone manufacturers manufacture many different makes and models of telephones with Touchtone capability, such as single line telephones, multiple line telephones, Videophones, cordless telephones and cellular telephones. There are also computers that can emulate a telephone such as a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) or a regular desktop or portable computer with a microphone speakers and telephone emulation software, such as Microsoft Phone connected to a telephone network via a telephone line with a modem or a cellular modem.

The caller location can also have a FAX 203. This is only used in Call Parallel (multiple telephone lines required at caller location) or Post Call processes. There are many Fax manufacturers and personal computers with a FAX modem and FAX emulation software that can emulate a fax.

The caller location can also have a computer 207 with a modem and/or ISDN card. The computer 207 is used in Call Parallel (multiple telephone lines at caller location required for modem) or Post Call processes. In another embodiment, the Call Parallel process can be performed on a single phone line by utilizing a digital simultaneous voice data (DSVD) modem, such as a Sportster Vi 28.8 Kbps fax modem from U.S. Robotics Inc., or by use of an ISDN line.

Servicing Locations

There are three types of servicing locations:

1. Servicing locations with no communications means 250: These locations include drop boxes and ATMs. This type of location only supports customer pickup or drop off.

2. Servicing Locations with a telephone 246: A telephone is required to answer customer calls and may be of any of the many types of telephones described above.

3. Servicing Locations with a telephone and other communication means 248: A telephone is used to answer customer calls and a FAX and/or computer can be used in Call Parallel and Post Call processes. The FAX and computer specifications are the same as those described in the caller location section above. In some cases, a vanity advertiser location can be a special purpose service location. If the service location computer is a CTI computer and includes an ISDN card or a modem, a multitasking operating system, such as Microsoft Windows NT, telephone emulation software, such as Microsoft Phone, and is logged into the call processing center Internet server 242, the servicing location has the same database access capabilities as the call center operator described below.

National Telecommunications Network 212 (FIG. 2)

The National Telecommunications Network 212 provides the switch and transmission infrastructure to connect and transmit voice, network information and data between the caller location, e.g., 202 or 204, the servicing location, e.g., 246 or 248, and the CTI network 200.

There are two classes of vanity number type calls: Class 1 telephone calls are calls wherein the final terminating location is a servicing location determined by intelligence outside the telecommunications network. There are three separate architectures for class 1 calls. Class 2 telephone calls are calls where the final terminating location is the network terminating point of the vanity number. Class 2 calls utilize one architecture, wherein the call terminates at the VRU 214. The network 212, the classes and the architectures will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 5. Call Processing Center 213 (FIG. 2)

The call processing center 213 which is, in essence, a service bureau for the vanity advertiser, is the central hub of the entire operation in supporting the caller, the vanity advertiser and the servicing locations. The preferred call processing center 213 is AT&T American Transtech (ATI) located in Jacksonville Florida. The center 213 interconnects with the national telecommunications network 212 and an optional remote database location 231 by the channels shown in FIG. 2. The call processing center 213 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 3 hereinbelow.

Remote Database Processing Center 231 (FIG. 2)

One or more of the databases shown in FIG. 1 and utilized by the call processing center 213 may be physically located at a location remote from the center 213. This may occur, for example, for reasons of convenience, ease of maintenance, security, legal issues, regulatory issues and so forth. From a purely technical perspective, all of the databases shown in FIG. 1 could be located at the call processing center 213. A mainframe computer 232 at the remote processing center 231 is connected to a call processing center dual LAN 216 by the gateway 230. The remote database center 231 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 4 hereinbelow.

Call Processing Center 213 (FIG. 3)

Referring to FIG. 3, the Call Processing Center 213 will now be further described. The call processing center 213 replaces the network operator or the initial answering party as it responds to input from the network 212 and the caller location, e.g., 202 or 204 (FIG. 2), retrieves information from various accessible databases, and uses this information to route the call to a service location, e.g., 246 or 248, or exceptions handling operator 222. In addition or alternatively, the call processing center 213 provides the caller at location 202 or 204, the servicing location 246 or

248, or the vanity advertiser (not shown) with application dependent information during the call, parallel to the call or post call by a variety of communications means.

The call processing center 213 includes the dual LAN 216 to which the VRU 214, the FAX server 238, the modem server 240, the Internet server 242, a SQL database server 218, a PBX/ACD CTI gateway 220, a CTI enabled host 224, one or more routing processor(s) 226, and the gateway to the remote database processing center 230 all bidirectionally interconnect. The dual LAN 216 comprises a primary LAN and a secondary LAN as a backup to provide fault-tolerant service. The LAN 216 utilizes the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) protocol. The PBX/ACD CTI gateway 220 and the CTI enabled host 224 each further connect to one or more human operators 222 as will be described hereinbelow. The SQL database server 218 further interconnects to the Telephone Number Validation and Type databases 100, the Client Location databases 134, the Client Tables 132 and a Call Transaction storage 236. The routing processor(s) 226 are further connected to the Master Table 102 and to the Client Tables 132. The databases and tables shown in FIG. 3 are preferably disk-resident, but with increased memory capacity for the database server or the routing processor, one or more of these databases could be converted by one skilled in the art to computer memory resident tables.

The VRU 214, such as the preferred AT&T Intuity Conversant Information Response System, is the primary interface between the national telecommunications network 212 and the rest of the call center 213 with its CTI (Computer Telephone Integration) network. The VRU 214 interconnects the national telecommunications network 212 with the dual LAN 216. The VRU 214 controls aspects of the call processing and routing processes. The VRU 214, as part of the CTI network 200, has the ability to control call processing and routing by:

- accepting the voice signal, ANI and DNIS from the telephone network;
- speaking recorded voice messages to the caller;
- translating caller key pad input DTME into computer data codes;
- translating caller voice commands, such as "1,2,3, A,B,C, Yes and No", to computer data codes;
- translating computer text into synthesized speech and speaking it to the caller;
- communicating with other call center telephone and computer network systems and operators via communication protocols, such as ISDN, TCP/IP, Systems Network Architecture (SNA) Logical Unit (LU) 6.2, over a dual-wired Local Area Network (LAN);
- communicating by a SNA LU 6.2 gateway over dual-pair leased data lines to a remote database center located at ACXIOM in Conway, Arkansas;
- sending the required information back to the telecommunications network to connect the caller with a servicing location; and
- writing out a call transaction record.

In addition to the VRU 214, the following is a list of other components of the call center 213 with a description of their functionality:

SQL Database Server 218

The Structured Query Language (SQL) Database server 218 connects to the call processing center LAN 216 and databases 100, 132, 134 and 236, as previously mentioned. The primary function of the SQL Database server 218 is to store and retrieve all call transaction data as well as storing, maintaining, and retrieving data from more dynamic data-

bases. Data retrieved by the SQL server 218 is utilized by the VRU 214, for example, to provide information to one or more of the call processing recipients. The transaction data is maintained in the Call Transaction storage 236, and is specific to the current call. The transaction data is used for any post-call processing that may occur, for billing, and for historical or record-keeping purposes. The other databases accessed by the SQL server 218 include databases 100 used during an Update, Validation and Classification process described in conjunction with FIG. 7, and databases 132 and 134 for providing information to a call recipient. The preferred SQL Database server is available from Oracle Corporation running on a UNIX machine, such as an AT&T model 3600.

The transaction data is indexed by multiple indices including, but not limited to:

- DNIS by caller provided telephone number
- DNIS by Date and Time
- DNIS by Service Location Telephone Number and by Date and by Time
- DNIS by Service Location Telephone Number and by Caller Telephone Number
- Caller provided telephone number by Date and Time

The transaction data includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- text (driveable directions, servicing location name and address)
- binary data (date, time, caller provided telephone number, ANI, DNIS, servicing location telephone number, operator or VRU handled call)
- graphics (maps showing the caller location, the servicing location and the street network)
- recorded voice (caller recorded name and address)

The dynamic databases include:

- Bellcore NPANXX Split file 344 (FIG. 7)
- Bellcore LERG6 file 350 (FIG. 7)
- Bellcore V&H Coordinate file 356 (FIG. 7)
- DNIS dependent Customer files indexed by telephone number 362 (FIG. 7)
- Exceptions file indexed by telephone number 368 (FIG. 7)
- DNIS dependent Client Tables 132 (FIG. 3)
- DNIS dependent Client Locations Tables 134 (FIG. 3)
- CTI PBX/ACD 220 and Host 224

The Private Branch Exchange/Automatic Call Distributor (PBX/ACD) 220 and the Host 224 both connect to the dual LAN 216, and further, to the set of human operators 222.

The current preferred subsystem is the one currently utilized by AT&T American Transtech which includes an AT&T PBX/ACD 220, an IBM Host 224 and AT&T CTI software. The primary function of these components is to provide the operators 222 with a means to communicate with the caller by voice and simultaneously communicate with the CTI network 200 via a video monitor, CRT, or other visual display device. The operators 222 are utilized during exceptions call handling, as will be described hereinbelow. The operators 222 are also utilized for semi-automated applications, such as the applications previously described above.

The subsystem provides the following operator functionality:

- communicate via voice with the caller.
- transfer the call to a servicing location using Transfer Connect.
- enter a caller provided address and other application specific information on a CRT or other visual display connected to the Host 224.
- Spatial Key code the entered address using Group 1 software and ATI software that properly formats the last 8 digits of the Spatial Key.

determine the servicing locations by accessing the DNIS defined Client Table 132 and Client Locations Table 134 based on the caller's Spatial Key.

display information retrieved from the selected Servicing Location Table record on the CRT.

display information on the CRT retrieved from remote databases based on knowing the caller's Spatial Key or telephone number.

write out a call transaction record.

Customer Routing Processors (CRP) 226

The Customer Routing processor 226 directly connects with the national telecommunications network 212 and with the dual LAN 216. The CRP 226 further connects to the Client Tables 132 and the Master Table 102. Based on the DNIS received from the network 212, one of the plurality of Client Tables 132 is selected for use in processing by the CRP 226. The preferred CRP 226 is a function of how it is connected to the CTI network 200. If it is connected directly to an AT&T Long Distance Carrier (LDC) switch 504 (FIG. 5), the preferred CRP 226 is a Sun "Sparc 10" running under UNIX. If it is connected to the ATI LAN 216, the preferred CRP 226 is an AT&T 3600 running UNIX. A single CRP 226 can contain multiple processors and each processor can support multiple clients.

The CRP 226 provides the information needed to either route and complete the telephone call or to facilitate a service location information request. The primary function of the CRP 226 is to accept a telephone number from the network 212 and return a Spatial Key by looking up the telephone number in the Master Table 102 and retrieving the Spatial Key. Alternatively, the routing processor 226 accepts both telephone number and a DNIS and return a list of Servicing location IDs with the distance from the caller provided telephone number location to the servicing location. The CRP 226 first looks up the telephone number in the Master Table 102 and retrieves the Spatial Key, and then looks up the retrieved Spatial Key in the DNIS dependent Client Table 132 and retrieves the Servicing location(s) information associated with the Spatial Key. The retrieved information is placed on the LAN 216 for access by the SQL server 218 to use in retrieving information from the Client Location tables 134.

Internet Server 242

The Internet Server 242 interconnects the national telecommunications network 212 and the dual LAN 216. The preferred Internet server 242 is an AT&T 3600 computer running UNIX and ATI software. The Internet server 242 facilitates retrieval of call transaction data by one or more of the caller, the servicing location or the vanity advertiser. The primary function of the Internet Server 242 is to provide post call or call parallel access to call transaction data or data retrievable from call transaction data by the caller, the servicing location or the vanity advertiser. The use of the Internet server 242 in servicing each of the information recipients will now be described.

For the caller, the server software provides the ability for the caller to download or receive electronic mail information related to the selected servicing location, such as, but not limited to, the name, address, a map or directions from the caller's location to the servicing location, hours open and a menu. Once connected to the ATI Internet site over the line 210 (FIG. 2), the caller is asked to enter his or her telephone number and a vanity number to obtain the information requested during the call.

For the vanity advertiser connected to the Internet server 242, the server software provides the vanity advertiser the ability to download or receive by electronic mail, informa-

tion related to a caller, such as, but not limited to, name, address, demographic data, and so forth, by entering the DNIS and the caller's telephone number. The above information may also be downloaded in a batch mode by entering the DNIS and a date/time range for selected servicing locations or all servicing locations.

For the servicing location, the server software provides the same download functionality over the line 244 (FIG. 2) as for the vanity advertiser. However, the service location can preferably only download, by file transfer, or receive, by electronic mail, call related data for its own location. The servicing location's electronic mail address is retrieved from the Client Service Locations file 134. In addition, for a service location with a CTI computer (such as location 248, FIG. 2), the Internet server 242 provides the access means for the servicing location to access caller telephone number and Spatial Key dependent data during the call.

FAX Server 238

The FAX Server 238 interconnects the national telecommunications network 212 and the dual LAN 216. The preferred FAX server 238 is an AT&T 3600 computer running UNIX with ATI FAX software. The FAX server 238 facilitates providing a way to provide printed information, such as a map or directions, to a call recipient. The primary function of the FAX server 238 is to send post call or call parallel Faxes to:

the caller, wherein the FAX contains service location information or directions to the servicing location.

the servicing location, wherein the FAX contains information about the caller or directions to the caller location.

The caller's FAX number is provided by the caller during the call to the VRU or the operator, and a FAX to the caller is sent over the line 210 (FIG. 2).

Alternatively, the servicing location's FAX number is obtained from the Client Locations table 134 and a FAX to the servicing location is sent over the line 244. The information that is faxed is a function of the DNIS, the client application and the FAX recipient.

Modem Server 240

The Modem Server 240 interconnects the national telecommunications network 212 and the dual LAN 216. The preferred Modem server 240 is an AT&T 3600 computer running UNIX and ATI software. The Modem server 240 is similar to the Internet server 242 in terms of media, and similar to both the Internet Server and FAX Server 238 in terms of functionality. The Modem server 240 provides another way for obtaining call parallel or post call information through the call processing center 213. Because of the time required to connect with the call center 213, slow data transmission rates and the cost of connect time, the Modem server 240 is not currently practical for some applications. This could obviously change in the future.

Remote Database Processing Center 231 (FIG. 4)

Referring to FIG. 4, the Remote Database Processing Center 231 will now be described. The Mainframe computer 232 at the remote processing center 231 is preferably connected to the call processing center LAN 216 over a set of dual-pair leased data lines by the SNA LU 6.2 gateway 230. The preferred remote database processing center 231 is operated by ACXIOM Corporation in Conway, Ark. ACXIOM acts as a data processing service bureau primarily using IBM mainframe computers 232 and Reduced Instruction Set Computing (RISC) UNIX processors 234 for several different Fortune 500 companies. ACXIOM currently provides real-time access or is in the process of establishing real-time access to all the remote databases shown in FIG. 4 and defined in detail in FIG. 1. They currently support

high-speed lease-line computer access to several client databases. They are also the preferred processor to build and maintain the Master Table 102 that is housed in its production form at AT&T American Transtech. Some of the remote databases shown in FIG. 4 could be stored at the Call Processing Center 213 or other locations remote to ACXIOM. The databases shown in FIG. 4 are preferably disk resident databases, but with increased memory capacity for the mainframe computer 232 or the migration to large memory 64 bit RISC computers like the DEC Alpha, one or more of these databases could be converted by one skilled in the art to computer memory resident tables.

National Telecommunications Network 212 (FIG. 5)

Referring to FIG. 5, the National Telecommunications Network 212 will be further described. As previously mentioned, there are two classes of vanity number calls. Class 1 telephone calls are calls where the final terminating location is a servicing location determined by intelligence outside the telecommunications network. Referring to FIG. 5, there are three separate architectures within Class 1 calls:

Architecture A uses a Customer Routing Processor (CRP) connected via a data link to the Long Distance Carrier (LDC) switch outside a Local Exchange Carrier (LEC). During call setup at the LDC, the ANI and DNIS are passed to a CRP that determines and returns the terminating POTS number. The call is then connected to the servicing location associated with the determined POTS number. This architecture is utilized in the prior art.

Architecture B is representative of a classical two call system. The first call is terminated at a VRU and the VRU determines the POTS number of the final destination and generates a second call from the VRU to the determined POTS number. It then patches the first and second call together so that the caller is connected to the servicing location. This architecture is also utilized in the prior art.

Architecture C, the preferred architecture for most present applications utilizes an advanced AT&T network feature called Transfer Connect or Post Answer Redirect. In this architecture, the call is first connected to the VRU through the LDC switch where the VRU determines the POTS number of the servicing location. The VRU sends this information to the LDC switch and the LDC switch drops the call link from the LDC switch to the VRU and connects the caller to the servicing location associated with the POTS number. There are three different implementations of Transfer Connect:

Blind Transfer: The call is transferred without knowing if the servicing location will answer or if servicing location's line is busy. This is the least costly implementation and the one illustrated in FIG. 5.

Consult and Transfer: The call is connected between the VRU or operator and the servicing location before the VRU or operator drops out of the loop. This is the preferred implementation if the operator needs to consult with the servicing location before transferring the caller to the servicing location.

Conference and Transfer: This is a three party conference call that includes the caller, the VRU or the operator and the servicing location. This is the preferred implementation to announce the call to the servicing location when the telephone is answered and before the caller is connected, or if an exceptions handling operator needs to be involved in a 3-way conversation.

Class 2 telephone calls are calls where the final terminating location is the network terminating point of the

vanity number. This is called architecture D, wherein the call terminates at the VRU. This is the preferred embodiment for applications that do not require connecting the caller to a servicing location.

In all four architectures, as illustrated in FIG. 5, the typical call starts with a caller at a caller location, such as location 202, dialing a vanity number. In FIG. 5, all inter-process connectivity lines are labeled with one or more of the letters A,B,C,D indicating the architecture for which the connectivity applies. Note that the connectivity illustrated in FIG. 5 applies to voice calls. The use of the national telecommunications network 212 for computer (e.g., for Internet use) or fax connections is well known in the technology and will therefore not be described herein.

In architectures ABCD, the switch at a LEC1 256 accepts the call over a line 264 from the caller location 202 and assigns an ANI (Automatic Number Identification) number that is independent of the telephone used. According to AT&T, over 98% of all switches currently assign and pass a 10 digit ANI number.

Next the call, ANI number, and DNIS (Dialed Number Identification Service) number are passed over a line 266 by LEC1 256 to a switch for a Long Distance Carrier (LDC) 258, such as AT&T, MCI or Sprint. The preferred carrier is AT&T.

In architecture A, the LDC 258 passes the ANI and DNIS over line a 268 to a CRP 226 located at a remote location and the CRP returns a servicing location telephone number.

In architectures BCD, the call is connected over lines B 270, C 272 or D 274 to a terminating switch 260. The terminating network switch 260 can be located at the LEC that services the call processing center housing the VRU 214 or the call processing center can be connected directly to the long distance network with an AT&T "MEGACOM 800" or AT&T "MULTIQuest 900" service. The preferred implementation in this CTI network 200 (FIG. 2) is the direct connection to the AT&T long distance network using an AT&T 4 ESS switch with "MEGACOM 800" service located at AT&T American Transtech in Jacksonville, Fla.

In architectures BCD, the call is connected over lines B 278, C 280 or D 276 to the VRU 214, which can be connected to exceptions handling operators 222 as shown in FIG. 3 at the call processing center 213.

In architectures BCD, the VRU 214 passes an ANI or caller provided telephone number and DNIS to the CRP 226 on a line 282. The routing processor 226 sends a servicing location information packet containing the servicing location telephone number to the VRU 214 on line 282. At this point architecture D is complete from a telecommunications network connectivity perspective.

In architecture B, the VRU 214 opens a second port and dials the servicing location telephone number on a line 284 through the switch 260.

In architecture C, the VRU 214 notifies the switch 260 via an information packet on a data line 286 that it wants to transfer the call on the incoming line 280 to the servicing location number contained in the information packet. Connection 280 is then dropped between the VRU 214 and the switch 260.

In architecture B, the switch 260 connects the second call on a line 288 to the LDC switch 258 and passes along the service location telephone number.

In architecture C, the switch 260 notifies the LDC 258 that it wants to transfer the call to the POTS number contained in the information packet by sending an information packet on a line 290. Connection line 272 is then dropped between the switch 260 and the LDC switch 258.

In architectures ABC, the LDC 258 connects the call to a LEC3 262 on a line 292. In most cases LEC3 and LEC1 are the same LEC. LEC3 then connects the call over a line 294 to a servicing location, such as location 246 or 248.

In FIG. 5, the VRU 214 is shown outside the National Telecommunications Network 212 and is located at the call processing center 213 (FIG. 3). Currently, the LDC portion of the network does support limited VRU capability with high capacity but restricted functionality VRUs called network prompters. In the future, with expansion of communications capabilities between the LDC 258 and the CRP 226 and the upgrading of the network VRU capabilities, the network VRU could assume all the responsibilities of the VRU 214 currently located at the call processing center 213. This evolutionary process can also proceed one step further once the LEC can provide national long distance service and the network evolves into an Intelligent Network (IN) and then into an Advanced Intelligent Network (AIN). At this point, the LDC 258 could be eliminated and the VRU 214 and many of the responsibilities, if not all, of the call center 213 (and the remote database center 231 (FIG. 4)) could be located at the LEC. The LEC could access the required virtual telephone number database, housed on a Service Control Point (SCP) computer (not shown), over the (AIN) signaling system #7 (SS7) network (not shown). Conceptually nothing will have changed other than changes in telecommunications laws and regulations which have created a more open system that makes more efficient network designs possible.

III. Call Center Call Process 300

Referring primarily to FIG. 6 and also to FIG. 2, a process 300 shows an overview of the preferred Call Center Call process. However, other hybrids and variations of the system process could be employed by one skilled in the art to provide the same functionality. Process 300 and other processes described herein are executed by one or more of the processors on the CTI network 200.

Process 300 (FIG. 6) begins with a caller, such as a caller at caller location 202, dialing a vanity number. The call is processed by the national telecommunications network 212 (FIG. 2) and is answered by the VRU 214 at the call center 213. The VRU 214 decodes the information packet passed by the network 212 and determines the ANI and DNIS as shown in state 302.

Moving to a decision state 304, process 300 provides a way for the caller to enter a first location telephone number other than the ANI of the telephone from which they are calling. This is used in applications such as sending flowers to, for example, the caller's mother for Mother's Day, where the caller wants to place an order with a florist that delivers to the location of their mother's telephone. Another exemplary application is when the caller wants information mailed to his/her home, but the call is from a work location. If this option is not selected at state 304, then the first location telephone number is set to the ANI. If the optional telephone number input is selected at decision state 304, function 306 is activated and the caller provides the new telephone number by key pad entry on a Touchtone telephone or other device providing DTMF data, or by speaking the number slowly to the VRU 214.

After the first location telephone number is set to the ANI, or after the optional telephone number input at function 306, process 300 advances to a Update, Validation, Classification and Screen process 308. Process 308 updates, validates and classifies the first location telephone number passed through

decision state 304 or from function 306. Process 308 will be described in detail hereinbelow in conjunction with FIG. 7.

The information obtained in process 308 is examined at a decision state 310. If the first location telephone number is invalid, the process 300 moves back to the top of decision state 304 to allow the caller to provide another telephone number. If the first location telephone number is a non-United States POTS number, such as a cellular number or a Canadian number, the call is sent to exception call handling at state 312. If the first location telephone number is a valid US POTS number, the process 300 proceeds to a function 314. The handling of invalid and non-US POTS numbers can vary by application.

At function 314, the valid US POTS first location telephone number is looked up in Master Table 102. If it is found, the matching Master Table record's Spatial Key is retrieved. If no Master Table record was found and retrieved, the call is routed to exception call handling at state 312 by a decision state 316. Otherwise, the call proceeds to a decision state 318.

If the application requires Spatial Key retrieved data related to the first location telephone number, decision state 318 calls a Retrieve and Verify process 320. Process 320 retrieves and verifies caller Spatial Key dependent data and is described in detail in conjunction with FIG. 8.

At the completion of process 320 or if decision state 318 evaluated to be false, process 300 proceeds to a decision state 322. If process 320 was called and the return flag's value is "exceptions", the call is routed to exception call handling at state 312. If the return flag value is "verified", or if decision state 318 evaluates false, the call continues on to an optional service locations decision state 324.

At decision state 324, if the application requires connecting the caller to a servicing location or providing the caller information regarding a servicing location(s), process 300 calls a Connect or Provide Information process 326. A detailed description of providing caller servicing location(s) information and connecting the caller to a servicing location is illustrated and explained in detail in Applicant's previous patent application entitled "Automatic Information and Routing System for Telephonic Services", U.S. Ser. No. 08/598,392, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

At the completion of process 326 or if decision state 324 evaluated to be false, process 300 proceeds to a decision state 328. At decision state 328, process 300 either spawns a Parallel Call process 330 and ends at state 332, or ends at state 332 without spawning parallel process 330. Both determining whether to spawn a parallel process and which parallel process to spawn are a function of the application and caller provided information. For example, a particular application may spawn a parallel process to FAX a map to a caller's FAX machine based on the caller's request while the call is in progress. Process 330 is described in conjunction with FIG. 9 below.

Referring now to FIG. 7, the process 308 (defined in FIG. 6) of adding intelligence to the input telephone number by retrieving information from telephone number indexed databases during the call will be described. Before process 308 is executed, the caller provided telephone number goes through the following preliminary checks or edits. Checks are made to determine if the telephone number is 10 digits in length, each of the 10 digits is a number from 0 to 9, and the "Ns", i.e., the first and fourth digits, in the NPA-NXX-XXXX are 2 or greater. Of course, if the public telephone network is changed to use telephone numbers extended to a length greater than 10 digits, the checks and other system aspects will be modified to account for the new length.

To determine area code exchange changes, the preferred embodiment uses a NPANXX Split file 344. This file provides the new NPANXX and its corresponding old NPANXX and the time period, called the permissive dialing period, in which both are active.

For determining the validity of a given telephone number, a LERG6 file 350 is preferred. LERG6 refers to one of the several LERG files. This file contains a record for each valid NPANXX, its current status, and for each block of line numbers, the switch to which this block of line numbers is assigned. If the input telephone number's NPANXX is not in this file, or the NPANXX is in the file but the line number is not currently assigned to a switch, the telephone number is an invalid telephone number at that point in time.

The preferred file for classifying a telephone number is a V&H Coordinate file 356. For each valid NPANXX, this file contains the type of service provided, e.g., POTS, cellular, pager, and so forth; a dialable flag; V&H coordinates which can be converted to latitude and longitude; and country, state and city in which the NPANXX is located.

Client specific Customer databases 362 have been around for years and are DNIS dependent. These databases are used for special handling of preferred customers, problem customers or used to lookup a customer's last order in a pizza delivery application, for example. These databases are created and maintained to meet the specific needs of each client.

A negative list or inverse list can be a global list or DNIS dependent. If it is DNIS dependent, it is usually combined with the Customer database described above. A negative list 368 is a list of phone numbers of customers and/or potential customers that have historically bounced checks, not paid their bills or have presented some other type of problem. Equifax maintains such a database of telephone numbers for a consortium of long distance carriers. Each carrier provides their list of problem customers and Equifax merges these into a master list that is used by the consortium members to identify potential customers that have been canceled by one carrier trying to sign up with another carrier.

FIG. 7 illustrates the preferred embodiment as five separate lookup, retrieval and validation functions in a single serial block. One skilled in the art could change the order, combine some of the databases together, or create five separate blocks for the same functionality. The databases in FIG. 7 are shown as disk resident databases, but since these databases are small in size, one or more of these databases could be converted by one skilled in the art to computer memory resident tables.

All the databases in FIG. 7 are preferably updated for NPANXX splits. The updates are incorporated in the Split file 344, the LERG6 file 350 and the V&H Coordinate file 356 by Bellcore, and each record in these files is date coded as to when it goes into effect. The Customer databases 362 and the Negative database 368 are updated by a process similar to that shown by states 802 through 816 of FIG. 18A for updating the Master Table for NPANXX splits.

The process 308 begins at a start block 340. The edited telephone number and DNIS shown in state 342 are inherited by process 308 and used by function 346 in conjunction with the system date to look up the edited telephone number's NPANXX record in the NPANXX Split file 344. If the record is found and it passes an effective date test, function 346 combines the new NPANXX and the line number to create an updated telephone number 348. If the record is not found or the record is found but the effective date has not occurred, function 346 moves the edited telephone number to the updated telephone number state 348.

Proceeding to a validation function 352, process 308 accepts the updated telephone number from state 348 and looks up the updated telephone number's NPANXX in the LERG6 file 350. If the record is found and the updated telephone number's line number falls within a range of currently supported line numbers, then the valid phone number flag in state 354 is set to "yes". If the record is not found or the record is found but the updated telephone number's line number does not fall within a range of currently supported line numbers, the valid phone number flag is set to "no". If the flag in state 354 is set to "no", all following fields are set to blank characters by function 352 so they can be written out at state 372 by function 370.

If the validity flag in state 354 is "yes", then function 358 accepts input from state 354 and retrieves the V&H coordinate record corresponding to the updated telephone number's NPANXX from the V&H Coordinate file 356. The NPANXX is then classified by function 358, and the result along with previously determined information is written to state 360.

Continuing to a lookup function 364, process 308 accepts input from state 360. If the validity flag is "yes" and the DNIS corresponds to an on-line Customer database 362, then the updated telephone number is looked up in the corresponding DNIS Customer database. If the record is found, then the customer data is retrieved. Function 364 then writes the customer data and previously retrieved data to "customer data" at state 366. If the record is not found, the "customer data" is set to blank characters.

Advancing to a lookup function 370, process 308 accepts input from state 366. If the validity flag is "yes" and the Negative database 368 is present, function 370 then looks up the updated telephone number in the Negative database 368. If the updated telephone number is found, then the corresponding data is retrieved. If the updated telephone number is not found, the Negative database data is set to blank characters. Function 370 then writes out all retrieved and determined information at state 372. Process 308 completes and the information is returned at state 374.

Referring to FIG. 8, process 320 first identified in FIG. 6 will now be described. Process 320 begins at a start state 376 and has access to the first location's Spatial Key at state 378. State 380 uses the Spatial Key from state 378 to retrieve application specific Spatial Key dependent data from a set of Spatial Key Indexed databases 382. These are the Spatial Key Indexed Databases 106-134 shown in FIG. 1 and previously described in detail.

Moving to state 384, process 320 uses the VRU 214 (FIG. 2) to speak application dependent retrieved data to the caller for verification or additional input. Continuing to state 386, process 320 provides the caller a way to verify the retrieved data spoken by the VRU at state 384 or to provide additional application specific input as requested by the VRU 214 at state 384.

Proceeding to a decision state 388, process 320 determines if the caller has responded properly to the VRU 214 and/or validated the retrieved Spatial Key dependent data. If the caller has not responded properly or has verified the retrieved data as being erroneous, an exception handling return code flag is set to "exception" and process 320 exits at state 390. However, if it is determined at decision state 388 that the caller has responded properly, the call proceeds to a decision state 392.

At decision state 392, process 320 determines if the application requires additional caller input or data verification. If additional caller input or verification is required,

decision state 392 routes the call back to state 380. If additional caller input or verification is not required, the call proceeds to state 394.

Process 320 uses state 394 to write out the application and caller specific data to the Call Transaction Storage 236 (FIG. 3) and set the return flag to "verified." Process 320 then exits at state 396 and returns to state 322 in process 300 (FIG. 6).

Referring to FIG. 9, the operation of the Call Parallel process 330 (defined in FIG. 6) will now be described. FIG. 9 shows a preferred generic implementation of the Call Parallel process 330. The primary function of the Call Parallel process is to provide call, caller, servicing location data and spatial relationship data between the location associated with the caller provided telephone number and the servicing location to the caller and/or servicing location by a medium other than voice. A non-inclusive list of examples includes: faxed maps, directions, addresses, hours open, menus, computer files or computer software. Since the Call Parallel process 330 is broad in scope, using this information, one skilled in the art could develop a specific parallel application that is technically different, but accomplishes the above of providing call dependent information that is independent of the actual call connectivity by a means other than voice to the caller or servicing location.

Process 330 begins at a start state 502 and proceeds to state 504 where it retrieves call transaction data from the Call Transaction Storage 236 and application specific data from the Spatial Key Indexed Databases 382. Advancing to state 506, process 330 formats the data retrieved at state 504. The format of the data is a function of the application and the communication means. Once the data is formatted, the next step is to physically connect to the receiving party address. Since there is always the possibility of not being able to physically connect to the recipient address, a way of retrying needs to be incorporated into the system. Process 330 begins this retry process at state 508 by initializing the connect attempts count to zero by setting a variable T equal to zero.

Moving to state 510, process 330 tries to establish a connection with the receiving party. The recipient address is a function of the communications means. A partial list of examples includes a FAX telephone number, a modem telephone number, an E-Mail address or an Internet address. Proceeding to state 512, process 330 increments the connect attempts count, $T=T+1$.

Continuing at a decision state 514, process 330 determines if a connection has been made with the recipient address. If the connection has not been established, process 330 proceeds to a decision state 516. At decision state 516, process 330 determines if the retry maximum count has been reached by testing if the value of T is greater than the application-dependent parameter `RETRY_MAX`. If T is not greater than `RETRY_MAX`, process 330 loops back to state 510. However, if T is greater than `RETRY_MAX`, as determined at decision state 516, process 330 proceeds to state 518. At state 518, process 330 writes a transaction to an error log and then proceeds to an end state 524. The system examines the error log on a periodic basis, researches communication problems and takes appropriate action to correct the problem.

If process 300 determines at decision state 514 that a connection has been established at state 510, the process proceeds to state 520 and begins transmitting the information. Upon completion of the transmission at state 520, process 330 proceeds to a decision state 522 and determines if all the data was transmitted. If the transmission was complete, process 330 terminates at state 524. If the trans-

mission was not complete, as determined at decision state 522, process 330 proceeds to decision state 516. At decision state 516, process 330 determines if the retry maximum count has been reached by testing if the value of T is greater than the application-dependent parameter `RETRY_MAX`. If the value of T is not greater than `RETRY_MAX`, process 330 loops back to state 510. However, if T is greater than `RETRY_MAX`, as determined at decision state 516, process 330 proceeds to state 518, writes a transaction to the error log and then proceeds to end process state 524.

IV. CASS Certified Address Build

Some call processing applications may require use of a CASS certified address, e.g., address lookup and verification by an operator taking a telephone order. Referring now to FIG. 10, the use of two USPS databases by a process 540 for building a CASS certified address from a Spatial Key will be explained.

The process 540 to build a CASS certified address begins at a start state 542 and moves to a state 544. At state 544, process 540 indexes the first five digits of the Spatial Key into a USPS City State File 430 and retrieves the preferred last line name (City Name) and State at state 546. Moving to state 548, process 540 indexes the first nine digits (ZIP+4) of the Spatial Key into the ZIP+4 Address Coding Guide (ACG) 404, and the ZIP+4 record is retrieved at state 550. This record contains all the components required to build an address: street pre-direction, street name, street type, street post-direction and secondary address type. The pre-direction and post-direction refer to a compass direction, such as Northwest. The general rule for creating the street number at state 552 is to replace the last two digit of a starting primary address number (SPAN) from the ZIP+4 record with digits 10 and 11 from the Spatial Key and strip off any leading zeros from the starting primary address number.

Proceeding to a decision state 554, a determination is made as to whether a secondary address number is required by the USPS ZIP+4 type retrieved from the ZIP+4 ACG 404. If the ZIP+4 type is "F" for Firm or "H" for High-rise, a secondary address is generally required. If so required, process 540 moves to state 556 and obtains the secondary address from the last eight digits of the Spatial Key with any leading zeros stripped off. At the completion of processing the secondary address at state 556 or if the secondary address was not required, as determined at decision state 554, final formatting of the address components is performed at state 558. The final formatting is a function of the client application and the type of ZIP+4. Process 540 completes at end state 560.

V. Master Table Build and Maintenance Description

The Master Table 102 (FIGS. 1, 3, 6) is designed to be used by both regulated and non-regulated entities in the regulated telephone network, and therefore, none of the Master Table data can be customer provided network information. There are four separate processes to build and maintain the Master Table that will be described in conjunction with FIGS. 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D. These processes show that customer provided network information is not used in the Master Table.

The goal of the processes described in FIG. 11A is to provide either a regulated or non-regulated data provider a way of taking data about customers and processing it through commercial software and reformatting the result using a reformatting program. This creates a file containing abstract verification records that can be shipped to an

authorized, regulated processing center, such as ACXIOM Corporation in Conway, Ark. The purpose of the validation files is to verify the current linkage between a telephone number and a USPS address. The data providers are provided with the NPANXX Split file to make sure that all their telephone numbers are current. There are two types of verification records: "connects" and "disconnects". Many data providers can only provide "connect" records. The verification record contains the following data fields:

Telephone Number	10 Characters
Spatial Key	19 Characters
Connect or Disconnect Date	3 Characters (YYYYMMDD)
Data Provider Code	2 Characters
ZIP+4 Coding Status	2 Characters
Transaction Type	1 Character (C = Connect D = Disconnect)
Entity Name	40 Characters (Business and Government records only)

The data provider code identifies the source of the customer data. One character of the ZIP+4 coding status identifies the type of address, e.g., post office box, rural route, high-rise building, general delivery and so forth. The other character of the ZIP+4 coding status identifies how the ZIP+4 code was matched and is potentially used to identify or rectify an incorrect record at a later time. The entity name is required for business and government records. For consumer records, the entity name can be a building name or set to blank characters. In cases where the customer moves and keeps their current telephone number, it is preferred that both a connect and disconnect record are generated.

Referring now to FIG. 11A, a Coding process 402 uses commercial address standardization and DPC coding software, such as AccuMail® or CODE-1®, available from Group 1 Software, Inc. This software takes input from a database 400 provided by a data provider or client and uses the commercial software's version of the USPS ZIP+4 address coding guide 404 to address standardize and DPC or ZIP+6 code the customer record's address. It then appends the DPC and the ZIP+4 coding status to the customer record and writes the result to a ZIP+6 coded file 406.

A Create Abstract Records process 408 reads the ZIP+6 coded records from file 406 and reformats the record to the record layout shown above. It also reads the NPANXX Split file 344 into memory and if necessary, based on the date, changes the NPANXX. It then writes the resultant reformatted record to a Data Provider Verification file Tape (or other storage media) 412 to be shipped to the processing facility.

FIG. 11B illustrates the processing at a certified, regulated data processing facility, such as ACXIOM, that uses a Data Provider Verification file to link telephone numbers from the LERG file with Addresses and DPC codes from the USPS address coding guide. The resultant file contains telephone numbers from LERG, a telephone number type code from the V&H file, address and DPC codes from the USPS and processing codes and dates provided by the data providers.

Referring now to FIG. 11B, a Sort, Match and Append process 422 starts by reading a record from the LERG file 350 and generating a list of phone numbers that are potentially connected to a terminating location from a LEC switch for all blocks of line numbers that are connected to a LEC switch(s) within the current LERG NPANXX. It then reads a record from the Data Provider Verification file 412 that has been sorted by telephone number. If the records match (thereby only valid telephone numbers are taken from the LERG file), the type of telephone code (e.g., POTS, cellular,

pager, marine, and so forth) is retrieved from the V&H file 356 and a new record is generated containing the LERG telephone number, the V&H type of telephone code and all data provider data (including the Spatial Key) except the telephone number. The resultant new record is written to an Intermediate file 426. If a telephone number is on the Data Provider Verification file 412, but not on the LERG file 350, it is written to the Invalid Telephone Number file 424. Telephone numbers on the LERG file 350 that are not on the Data Provider Verification file 412 are skipped. This process is continued until all records on both files have been read and compared. The process 422 is further described in conjunction with FIG. 12 hereinbelow.

Proceeding to a Sort, Expand, Match and Append process 432 (FIG. 11B), process 432 is very similar to process 422 in function, but uses a slightly different technique. Process 432 utilizes the Intermediate file 426 generated by process 422 (FIG. 12), and the USPS City State file 430 and ZIP+4 file 404 to generate an address and a new Spatial Key, both of which are written to a Data Provider Verified Linkage Update (DPVLU) database 436. Process 432 is further described in conjunction with FIGS. 17A and 17B hereinbelow.

Referring now to FIG. 11C, two processes 440 and 444, which comprise the Master Table Update preprocess, will be described. The Data Provider Verified Linkage Update database 436 that is generated by process 432 (FIG. 11B) is used as one of the inputs to a Verify and Append DSF Information process 440. The process 440 validates the addresses constructed in process 432 (FIG. 11P) against a USPS Delivery Sequence File (DSF) 438. The DSF file 438 is only licensed by the USPS to selected processing centers, such as ACXIOM, and the file can only be used to verify existing addresses. It differs from the ZIP+4 address coding guide 404 (FIGS. 11A and 11B) in that the coding guide provides only an address range for each ZIP+4, such as 101 to 199 Main St. In the DSF 438, there is one record for each USPS deliverable address, such as 125, 151, or 175 Main St. In this example, the other potential odd numbered addresses within the ZIP+4 address coding guide address range do not exist. Matching against the DSF file also provides the ability to append a delivery type code.

A Determine Overlap process 444 provides the ability to determine if the location corresponding to a telephone number and the associated USPS address cannot be physically located at the same physical location. If the USPS address is a P.O. Box, Rural Route (RR) or General Delivery, it is obvious that the telephone number does not terminate at the address because the address is not a physical address. However, since the database is multi-sourced, some of the street, high-rise and firm addresses provided are billing addresses, not physical addresses. In routing and delivery applications, such as pizza delivery, it is critical to identify telephone numbers with Spatial Keys associated with a "foreign" physical location, such as a billing address. ACXIOM has created a file using a variety of databases that identifies which NPANXXs and 5 digit ZIP codes spatially overlap. If the update record's NPANXX-ZZZZZ (where the ZZZZZ represents a 5 digit ZIP code) is indexed in this file and there is no record found, then the NPANXX and the ZZZZZ do not spatially overlap. If NPANXX-ZZZZZ is found on the ACXIOM file, then the telephone number and ZIP Code are spatially proximate within a 2.5 mile error range. However, it is still not 100 percent certain that the telephone number and USPS address are located together. To solve this problem, applications that require 100% reliability must be designed to give the caller the ability to verify the

address associated with the telephone number. An application having this ability was previously described above.

Referring now to FIG. 11C, the operation of the processes 440 and 444 will be described. The Verify and Append DSF Information process 440 reads and matches records from the Data Provider Verified Linkage Update database 436 and the USPS DSF file 438. If the data provider record matches the DSF file, then a DSF match flag is set to "yes" and the address delivery type code field is set to the value retrieved from the DSF file. If the data provider record does not match the DSF file, the DSF match flag is set to "no" and the delivery type code field is set to blank characters. All records from the Data Provider database 436 are reformatted and written to a DSF Verified database 442. At this point in the process, the entity or building, address, city and state fields are no longer required.

Proceeding to the Determine Overlap process 444, the process 444 starts by reading the DSF Verified database 442 and looking up the resultant record's NPANXX-ZZZZZ on the ACXIOM NPANXX To ZIP5 Overlap file 446. If the record is found, then an Overlap Flag is set to "yes", or else if the record is not found, the Overlap Flag is set to "no". All records are then written to a Data Provider Updates with LERG Phone Number and USPS Spatial Keys database 448 which comprises an update feed into a Master Table Update process 456.

FIG. 11D illustrates the Master Table Update process 456. There are three independent update steps or subprocesses required to keep the Master Table updated. The first step is the updating of telephone numbers based on changes in numbers administered by Bellcore. The second step is due to changes in Spatial Keys based on ZIP Code changes by the USPS. The third step concerns changes due to the connecting and disconnecting of telephone numbers with addresses based on consumers and businesses moving and adding or dropping existing telephone numbers or lines. The Master Table Update process 456 will be further described in conjunction with FIGS. 18A, 18B and 18C hereinbelow.

As was described above, the records in the Master Table 102/454 do not contain customer provided network information. The origin of the customer telephone number, address, and Spatial Key is not from the data provider file 400 or data provider tape 412. Only the data provider file connected/disconnected status and dates (first connect, disconnect, last verified) are utilized in the Master Table. The other Master Table information is from Bellcore, USPS, ACXIOM or generated by the Master Table build process.

Referring to FIG. 12, the Sort, Match and Append process 422, previously defined in FIG. 11B, will now be further described. Process 422 utilizes the Bellcore LERG file 350 of valid telephone numbers, the Bellcore V&H Coordinate file 356, and a sorted version (by telephone number) of the Data Provider Verification file 412 created by process 408 (FIG. 11A) as inputs. Process 422 generates new records and writes them to the Intermediate file 426 or writes invalid telephone numbers from the Data Provider Verification file 412 to the Invalid Telephone Number file 424.

Beginning at a start state 602, process 422 moves to state 604 wherein a variable `lerg_eof` is set to zero and a variable `dpv_eof` is set to zero. These variables will be used to check for end of file conditions below. Proceeding to a Read LERG File function 606, process 422 reads the LERG file and returns either with a list of phone numbers along with a number of records in the list and a V&H file telephone type, or with the variable `lerg_eof` set to one if the end of the LERG file has been reached. Function 606 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 13 hereinbelow.

Proceeding to state 608, process 422 accesses the list returned from function 606 (LERG_LIST) at the first 10 digit telephone number entry on the list, wherein an index `K=1`. Advancing to a Read Data Provider Verification (DPV) File function 610, process 422 reads a record in the sorted DPV file 412 and returns either with the DPV record, or with the variable `dpv_eof` set to one if the end of the DPV file has been reached.

Continuing at a decision state 612, process 422 compares the LERG 10 digit telephone number at `LERG_LIST(K)` to the 10 digit telephone number (`DPV_TELE#`) returned from function 610. If the telephone numbers are equal, process 422 moves to state 614 to generate a new record based on the telephone number from the LERG file 350, the telephone type from the V&H file 356 and all DPV file data other than the telephone number. Moving to state 616, the new record is written to the Intermediate file 426. Continuing at an Increment LERG_LIST function 618, process 422 increments the index variable `K` and either accesses the next entry in the current LERG_LIST or reads the next entry in the LERG file 350 to generate a new LERG_LIST indexed at `K=1`. Function 618 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 15 hereinbelow. Returning from the function 618 at a decision state 620, process 422 determines if the variable `lerg_eof` was set to one during function 618. If the end of LERG file condition is true, process 422 proceeds to the Read DPV File function 610 to read the next record in the DPV file 412.

If the end of the LERG file has not been reached, as determined at decision state 620, process 422 also continues to function 610 to read the next record in the DPV file 412. At the completion of function 610, process 422 determines if the end of the DPV file has been reached at a decision state 622. If so, because there are no further records to evaluate in the DPV file 412, process 422 finishes at an end state 624. However, if the end of the DPV file has not been reached, as determined at decision state 622, process 422 moves back to decision state 612 to compare the new current LERG_LIST entry to the new current DPV record.

If process 422 determines that the LERG_LIST entry at index `K` is greater than the `DPV_TELE#` at decision state 612, execution continues at a function 630 for writing the DPV file telephone number to the Invalid Telephone Number (ITN) file 424. Function 630 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 16 hereinbelow. At the completion of function 630, process 422 moves to the Read DPV File function 610 to read the next record in the DPV file 412. Proceeding to a decision state 632, process 422 determines if the end of the DPV file 412 has reached. If so, process 422 is finished and moves to end state 624. If the end of the DPV file 412 has not been reached, process 422 moves back to decision state 612 to compare the current LERG_LIST entry to the new current DPV record.

If process 422 determines, at decision state 612, that the `DPV_TELE#` is greater than the LERG_LIST entry at index `K`, execution continues at the Increment LERG_LIST function 618. Function 618 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 15 below. At the completion of function 618, process 422 moves to a decision state 634, to determine if the end of the LERG file 350 was reached. If the end of the LERG file has not been reached, process 422 moves back to decision state 612 to compare the new current LERG_LIST entry to the current DPV record. However, if the end of LERG file condition is true, as determined at decision state 634, process 422 proceeds to the Read DPV File function 610 to read the next record in the DPV file 412. Proceeding to a decision state 636, process 422 determines

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if the end of the DPV file 412 has been reached. If so, because there are no further records to evaluate in the DPV file 412, process 422 finishes at the end state 624. However, if the end of the DPV file 412 has not been reached, process 422 continues at the function 630 to write the telephone number from the DPV file record to the ITN file 424. At the completion of function 630, process 422 moves back to the Read DPV File function 610, as illustrated in FIG. 12. This loop of function 610, decision state 636 and function 630 continues until the end of the DPV file 412 is reached and process 422 finishes at the end state 624.

Referring now to FIG. 13, the Read LERG File function 606, defined in process 422 (FIG. 12), will be described. Function 606 reads the LERG file 350 and returns either with a list of phone numbers, or with an indication that the end of the LERG file has been reached.

The Read LERG File Function 606 begins at a start state 650 and moves to state 652 to read a record in the LERG file 350. Associated with the NPANXX of the LERG record is a set of line numbers. Proceeding to a decision state 654, function 606 determines if the end of the LERG file 350 has been reached. If so, the variable `lerg_eof` is set to one and function 606 returns at state 656 to process 422 (FIG. 12). If the end of the LERG file 350 has not been reached, as determined at decision state 654, function 606 advances to state 658. At state 658, the NPANXX of the LERG file record is used to check the V&H file 356 and retrieve a type of telephone code, e.g., cellular telephone type. The type of telephone presently is identified by the NPANXX of the 10 digit telephone number.

Proceeding to state 660, function 606 generates a list (LERG_LIST) of 10 digit telephone numbers having the NPANXX of the LERG record read in state 652. This results in a list of up to 10,000 telephone numbers with the potential of being connected from the LEC switch(s) to a terminating location like a household or business. The telephone type determined in state 658 is assigned to each telephone number in the list. Moving to state 662, the LERG_LIST index variable "K" is set to an initial value of one to point to the first telephone number in the list. A variable `Kmax` is set to the number of telephone numbers in the LERG_LIST. At the completion of state 662, function 606 returns with the list of phone numbers along with the V&H file telephone type, K, and `Kmax` to process 422 (FIG. 12) at a return state 664.

Referring now to FIG. 14, the Read DPV File function 610, defined in process 422 (FIG. 12), will be described. Function 610 begins at a start state 670 and moves to state 672 to read a record in the Data Provider Verification (DPV) file 412. Proceeding to a decision state 674, function 610 determines if the end of the DPV file has been reached. If so, the variable `dpv_eof` is set to one and function 610 returns at state 676 to process 422 (FIG. 12). If the end of the DPV file 412 has not been reached, as determined at decision state 674, function 610 returns with the DPV record to process 422 at a return state 678.

Referring now to FIG. 15, the Increment LERG_LIST function 618, defined in process 422 (FIG. 12), will be described. Function 618 increments the index variable K and either accesses the next entry in the current LERG_LIST or reads the next entry in the LERG file 350 to generate a new LERG_LIST.

Beginning at a start state 690, function 618 moves to state 692 and increments the index variable K by one. Continuing at a decision state 694, function 618 determines if the index variable K is greater than `Kmax`, the number of telephone

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numbers in the current LERG_LIST. If not, function 618 proceeds to state 700 and accesses the telephone number and telephone number type in the LERG_LIST at the index K (where K is from state 692 if K is less than or equal to `Kmax`, as determined at state 694). Function 618 returns at state 702 to process 422 (FIG. 12) with the telephone number and telephone number type.

Returning to decision state 694, if K is greater than `Kmax`, function 618 proceeds to call the Read LERG File function 606 to read the next record in the LERG file 350 and generate a new LERG_LIST indexed at `K=1`. Function 606 has been previously described above. At the completion of function 606, function 618 proceeds to a decision state 696 to determine if the end of the LERG file 350 has been reached. If so, function 618 returns with an end of file designation at a state 698 to process 422 (FIG. 12). If the end of the LERG file has not been reached, as determined at decision state 696, function 618 continues to state 700 and accesses the telephone number and telephone number type in the LERG_LIST at the index K (where K is from function 606 if K was greater than `Kmax`, as determined at state 694). Function 618 returns at state 702 to process 422 (FIG. 12) with the telephone number and telephone number type.

Referring now to FIG. 16, the Write Invalid Telephone Number (ITN) File function 630, defined in process 422 (FIG. 12), will be described. Function 630 begins at a start state 710 and moves to state 712 to write a record with the same format as the DPV record to the ITN file 424. Proceeding to a return state 714, function 630 returns to process 422 (FIG. 12).

Referring to FIGS. 17A and 17B, the Sort, Expand, Match and Append process 432, previously defined in FIG. 11B, will now be further described. Process 432 utilizes the Intermediate file 426 generated by process 422 (FIG. 12).

Process 432 begins at a start state 730 and moves to a state 732 to sort the Intermediate file 426 by ZIP+6 and create a sorted Intermediate file 426'. Moving to state 734, process 432 reads a record from the sorted Intermediate file 426' and then indexes the 5 digit ZIP Code against the USPS City State file 430 at state 736. Proceeding to a decision state 738, process 432 determines if the 5 digit ZIP Code is found in the City State file 430. If the 5 digit ZIP Code is found, then the City State data is retrieved at state 742. If the 5 digit ZIP Code is not found, as determined at decision state 738, process 432 moves to state 740 and the record from the sorted Intermediate file 426' is written to the Invalid ZIP Code file 434. At the completion of state 740, process 432 moves back to state 734 and the next record is read from the sorted Intermediate file 426'.

After retrieving the city state record at state 742, process 432 moves to state 744 and the ZIP+4 from the sorted Intermediate file 426' is indexed against the USPS ZIP+4 file 404. Proceeding to a decision state 746, process 432 determines if the ZIP+4 record is found in the ZIP+4 file 404. If so, process 432 moves to state 748 and the ZIP+4 record is retrieved from file 404 and the ZIP+4 data is written to a Data Provider Verified Linkage Update database 436 at state 750. If the ZIP+4 record is not found in the ZIP+4 file 404, process 432 proceeds to state 740 wherein the record is written to the Invalid ZIP Code file 434 and then the next record is read from the sorted Intermediate file 426' at state 734.

After retrieving the ZIP+4 record at state 748 and writing the ZIP+4 to the DPVLU database at state 750, process 432 moves to state 752 and accesses the ZIP+6 from the sorted Intermediate file record (obtained at state 734). Proceeding

to state 754, process 432 compares the last two digits of the ZIP+6 from the sorted Intermediate file 426' against the primary address range of the ZIP+4 record from file 404. Proceeding through an off-page connector A 755 to a decision state 756 (FIG. 17B), process 432 determines if the building number falls in the primary address range and generates a unique address. If so, process 432 moves to state 760 wherein a USPS address is constructed from the ZIP+4 record and the valid ZIP+6 flag is set to "yes". If the building number does not fall in the primary address range and generate a unique address, as determined at decision state 756, process 432 continues at state 758 wherein the valid ZIP+6 flag is set to "no" and the address is set to blank characters. At the completion of state 758, process 432 proceeds through an off-page connector B 759 to state 734 (FIG. 17A) wherein the next record is read from the sorted Intermediate file 426'.

At the completion of state 760, process 432 moves to a decision state 762 to determine if the ZIP+4 record type is "H" for High-rise or "F" for Firm. If so, process 432 moves to state 764 wherein the last eight digits of the 19 digit Spatial Key from the sorted Intermediate file 426' are processed through an editing and reformatting process utilizing the following edits and reformat:

All lower case letters are set to upper case; for example "3a" is set to "3A".

Any special characters, except "/" when it is both preceded and followed by a number are eliminated; for example, "3-B" is set to "3B" while "1/2" is left unchanged.

All special character strings, such as APT, STE, FLR, and so forth, are eliminated; for example, "APT B" is set to "B". All numeric fields are right justified and filled with leading zeros; for example, "123" is set to "00000123".

Fields containing a letter, such as "B" or a "/", are left justified and filled with trailing blank characters; for example, "B123" is set to "B123 ".

A blank character is inserted prior to the first number preceding a "/"; for example "B31/2" is set to "B3 1/2".

At the completion of the edit and reformat state 764, process 432 continues at state 766 wherein a list of secondary addresses is created from the secondary address range retrieved from the ZIP+4 record. The secondary address is similar to the primary address in that there is a range. For example, if the range is 1 to 100, a list of 100 potential secondary addresses are generated. If the range is not a straight numeric, such as 3A to 3N, then secondary addresses 3A, 3B, . . . 3N are generated. In most situations where the secondary address is complex, such as 3B 1/2, the range or span on the ZIP+4 file is 3B 1/2 to 3B 1/2.

Proceeding to state 768, process 432 compares the edited and reformatted eight character string one record at a time to the list of secondary addresses created at state 766. Advancing to a decision state 770, process 432 determines if the eight character string matches one of the list records. If the string matches a list record, process 432 moves to state 772 wherein the secondary address is extracted from the list and the secondary address match flag is set to "yes." If the secondary address does not match, as determined at decision state 770, process 432 proceeds to state 774 wherein the secondary address match flag is set to "no" and the secondary address is set to blank characters.

At the completion of processing the secondary address and the match flag at state 772 or 774, or if decision state 762 evaluates to be false, process 432 advances to state 776 wherein the resultant generated address and new Spatial Key are written to the Data Provider Verified Linkage Update database 436. This database contains phone numbers from

the LERG file 350; type codes from the V&H file 356; address, city, state, Spatial Key and Codes from the USPS files 404 and 430; and dates and processing codes from the Data Provider Verification file 412. After writing the DPVLU database 436 at state 776, process 432 advances to a decision state 778 to determine if all records in the sorted Intermediate file 426' have been processed. If not, process 432 proceeds through the off-page connector B 759 to state 734 (FIG. 17A) wherein the next record is read from the sorted Intermediate file 426'. However, if all records in the sorted Intermediate file 426' have been processed, process 432 finishes at an end state 780.

Referring to FIGS. 18A, 18B and 18C, the Master Table Update process 456, previously defined in FIG. 11D, will now be further described. This is a three step process that first updates the telephone numbers and the Spatial Keys in a current Master Table 454 before updating it with time-synchronized transactions. The current Master Table 454 and an Updated Master Table 458 are working copies (as described below) of the Master Table 102 shown in FIGS. 1 and 3. Upon completion of process 456, the Current Master Table 454 is not needed and becomes the Master Table 102.

Prior to the Master Table Update process 456, the Master Table has the following record structure:

Field	Size	Source
Telephone number	10 Characters	Bellcore
Spatial Key	19 Characters	USPS
Status (connected or disconnected)	1 Character	Data provider
First Connect Date	8 Characters	Data provider
Last Verified Date	8 Characters	Data Provider
Disconnect Date	8 Characters	Data Provider
Data Provider Code	2 Characters	Assigned
NXXType	2 Characters	Bellcore
Point Identification	1 Character	Bellcore
ZIP+4 Type	1 Character	USPS
Secondary Address Unit Type	1 Character	USPS
ZIP+6 Unique Match Flag	1 Character	Assigned
Secondary Address Match Flag	1 Character	Assigned
Matched DSF Flag	1 Character	Assigned
DSF Delivery Type Code	1 Character	USPS
NPANXX-ZZZZ Overlap Flag	1 Character	ACXIOM

A step 1 of process 456 (FIG. 18A) updates telephone numbers based on changes in numbers administered by Bellcore. Beginning at a start state 801, process 456 moves to state 802 and reads a record from the Current Master Table 454. Moving to state 804, process 456 looks up the Master Table NPANXX in the Bellcore NPANXX Split file 344. Continuing to a decision state 806, process 456 determines if the NPANXX is found in the Split file 344 and the split date is prior or equal to the update date. If so, process 456 advances to state 810 wherein the Current Master Table NPANXX field is updated with the new NPANXX. If the NPANXX is not found in the Split file 344 or the NPANXX is found on the split file but the split date is after the update date, process 456 proceeds to state 808 to indicate that the Current Master Table NPANXX field is left unchanged. At the completion of updating the NPANXX field at state 810 or if the record is left unchanged at state 808, process 456 moves to state 812 wherein the Current Master Table record is written to the Updated Master Table 458. This process (states 802 through 812) is repeated until all records in the Current Master Table 454 have been read and processed as determined at a decision state 814. When all records in the Current Master Table 454 have been read and processed, process 456 moves to state 816 wherein the Updated Master Table 458 is re-indexed and becomes the Current Master

Table 454. Process 456 then proceeds through an off-page connector A 817 to state 818 (FIG. 18B).

A step 2 of process 456 (FIG. 18B) accounts for changes in Spatial Keys based on ZIP Code changes by the USPS. Starting at state 818, process 456 reads a record from the Current Master Table 454. Proceeding to state 820, process 456 looks up the Master Table record's ZIP+4 in an enhanced USPS ZIPMOVE file 452. The ZIPMOVE file 452 includes ZIP Code changes by the USPS for ZIP+4 codes that have been moved and that have also had a change in finance number or last line name(city). The USPS ZIP+4 Move file is enhanced with ZIP+4 moves that have not changed either finance number or last line name by extracting a list of ZIP+4s that have changed in the current month from the USPS ZIP+4 Change file. All records with these ZIP+4s are extracted from the current Master Table, and USPS addresses are generated from the last month's USPS ZIP+4 address coding guide as described in process 540 (FIG. 10). This address file is then DPC coded using USPS CASS certified address coding software. The old DPC code and the new DPC codes are then compared and if they are different, these records are merged with the USPS ZIP+4 Move file. This new reformatted and deduped file is called the Enhanced ZIP Move file, which contains both ZIP+4 and DPC or ZIP+6 moves. DPC moves occur when a ZIP+4 does not change but, for example, an old building with the ZIP+4 is torn down and replaced with a new high-rise that requires its own ZIP+4.

Continuing at a decision state 822, process 456 determines if the ZIP+4 is found in the enhanced ZIPMOVE file 452 and the ZIP+4 move is applicable to the Current Master Table record DPC. If the ZIP+4 is found in the ZIPMOVE file 452, process 456 advances to state 826 wherein the Current Master Table ZIP+4 and ZIP+4 Type Fields are updated with the new ZIP+4 and ZIP+4 Type. If the ZIP+4 is not found in the ZIPMOVE file 452 or the ZIP+4 is found but is not applicable to the Current Master Table record DPC, as determined at decision state 822, the Current Master Table record is left unchanged. At the completion of updating the ZIP+4 and ZIP+4 type fields at state 826 or if the record is left unchanged at state 824, process 456 moves to state 828 wherein the Current Master Table record is written to the Updated Master Table 458. This process (states 818 through 828) is repeated until all records in the Current Master Table 454 have been read and processed as determined at a decision state 830. When all records in the Current Master Table 454 have been read and processed, process 456 moves to state 832 wherein the Updated Master Table 458 is copied to the Current Master Table 454. Process 456 then proceeds through an off-page connector B 833 to state 834 (FIG. 18C).

A step 3 of process 456 (FIG. 18C) concerns changes due to the connecting and disconnecting of telephone numbers with addresses based on consumers and businesses moving and adding or dropping existing telephone numbers or lines. Starting at state 834, process 456 initializes a variable `mt_eof` to zero, a variable `dpu_eof` to zero, and a variable `old_dpu_rec` to null (" "). The first two of these variables will be used to check for end of file conditions below. Variable `old_dpu_rec` is used to track the previous read of the Data Provider Updates (DPU) database 448, and is initially set to null before the first read of the database 448. Proceeding to a Read DPU Database function 836, process 456 reads the DPU database and returns either with a DPU record, which includes a 10 digit telephone number, or with the variable `dpu_eof` set to one if the end of the DPU database 448 has been reached. The DPU database 448 is

indexed by 10 digit telephone number in ascending order. Function 836 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 19 hereinbelow.

Proceeding to a Read Master Table (MT) function 838, process 456 reads a record in the Master Table 454 and returns either with the MT record, which includes a 10 digit telephone number, or with the variable `mt_eof` set to one if the end of the MT 454 has been reached. The Master Table 454 is indexed by 10 digit telephone number in ascending order. Function 838 will be further described in conjunction with FIG. 20 hereinbelow. After reading both the DPU database 448 and the MT 454, process 456 continues at a decision state 840 and compares the 10 digit telephone number field of the Master Table 454 against the 10 digit telephone number field of the DPU database 448. If the telephone numbers are equal, process 456 moves to state 842 to update the current MT record in memory from the dates, codes and sources of the one or more DPU records obtained from the last execution of the Read DPU function 836. Proceeding to a decision state 844, process 456 examines the updated record in memory to determine if a "Disconnect" transaction type indicator is active in the record. If the "Disconnect" indicator is not active, process 456 continues at a Write to Updated Master Table function 846, wherein the updated record is written to the Updated Master Table 458. The Write to Updated Master Table function 846 is shown in FIG. 21. At the completion of the write at function 846 or if the "Disconnect" indicator is active, as determined at decision state 844, process 456 continues at the Read DPU Database function 836, previously described above, to get the next one or more records (having a new 10 digit telephone number) from the DPU database 448. If the "Disconnect" indicator is active (decision state 844), the updated current MT record in memory is effectively deleted by not writing the record to the Updated Master Table 458 (function 846). Process 456 then proceeds to the Read Master Table function 838, previously described above, to get the next record from the MT 454. Moving to a decision state 850, process 456 determines if the variable `mt_eof` is set to one, which indicates that the end of the MT 454 has been reached.

If the end of the Master Table 454 has been reached, as determined at decision state 850, process 456 advances to a decision state 852 to determine if the variable `dpu_eof` is set to one, which indicates that the end of the DPU database 448 has been reached. If so, process 456 moves to state 854 wherein the Updated Master Table 458 is copied to the Current Master Table 454. Process 456 completes at an end state 856.

However, if the end of the DPU database 448 has not been reached, as determined at decision state 852, or alternatively, if the 10 digit telephone from the Master Table record is greater than the 10 digit telephone number from the DPU database (as determined at decision state 840), process 456 continues at state 860. At state 860, process 456 creates a Master Table record in memory from the one or more DPU database records obtained during the last execution of the Read DPU function 836. The DPU database 448 may have multiple records for a particular 10 digit telephone number. Each of these records has a date associated with the record data that is used to determine the most current data to use at state 860. For example, a early first DPU record may have a "Disconnect" indicator which would lead to deleting the record, but a later second DPU record indicates a "Connect" for the 10 digit telephone number, thus effectively negating the "Disconnect" from the first DPU record. Proceeding to a decision state 862, process 456 examines the created MT

record in memory to determine if the "Disconnect" indicator is active in the record. If the "Disconnect" indicator is not active, process 456 continues at the Write to Updated Master Table function 846, wherein the created MT record is written to the Updated Master Table 458. The Write to Updated Master Table function 846 is shown in FIG. 21. At the completion of the write at function 846 or if the "Disconnect" indicator is active, as determined at decision state 862, process 456 continues at the Read DPU Database function 836, previously described above, to get the next one or more records (having a new 10 digit telephone number) from the DPU database 448. If the "Disconnect" indicator is active (decision state 862), the created MT record in memory is effectively deleted by not writing the record to the Updated Master Table 458 (function 846). Continuing at decision state 850, process 456 determines if the end of the Master Table 454 has been reached.

If the end of the Master Table 454 has not been reached, as determined at decision state 850, process 456 advances to a decision state 864 to determine if the variable `dpu_eof` is set to one, which indicates that the end of the DPU database 448 has been reached. If the end of the DPU database 448 has been reached, or alternatively, if the 10 digit telephone number from the Master Table record is less than the 10 digit telephone number from the DPU database (as determined at decision state 840), process 456 moves to state 866. At state 866, the current Master Table record in memory is not changed but is passed on to the Write to Updated Master Table function 846, wherein the current MT record is written to the updated Master Table 458. The Write to Updated Master Table function 846 is shown in FIG. 21. At the completion of the write at function 846, process 456 continues at the Read Master Table function 838, previously described above, to get the next record (having a new 10 digit telephone number) from the Master Table 454. Process 456 continues at the decision state 850 as previously described. Returning to decision state 864, if the end of the DPU database 448 has not been reached, process 456 loops back to the decision state 840 (previously described) to determine the relationship between the current 10 digit telephone number from the Master Table record and the current 10 digit telephone number from the DPU database.

Referring now to FIG. 19, the Read Data Provider Updates (DPU) Database function 836 will be further described. The Read DPU Database function 836 was previously defined in FIG. 18C. The DPU database 448 is indexed by 10 digit telephone numbers in ascending order.

Beginning at a start state 880, function 836 moves to a decision state 882 to determine if the variable `old_dpu_rec` is equal to null. If so, this indicates that this is the first call of function 836 and the first record in the Data Provider Updates database 448 is read at state 884. Proceeding to state 886, function 836 moves the DPU record read at state 884 into variable `old_dpu_rec`. At the completion of state 886, or if the variable `old_dpu_rec` was not equal to null at decision state 882 (indicating that this is not the first read of the DPU database), function 836 moves to state 888 and set a variable `K` equal to one. Continuing at state 890, function 836 moves the DPU record in `old_dpu_rec` into a list `dpu_list` at an address `K` of the list. Advancing to state 892, function 836 reads the next record in the DPU database 448 and checks for the end of the DPU database at a decision state 894. If the end of the database is reached, function 836 proceeds to state 896, sets the variable `dpu_eof` equal to one and returns at state 898 to process 456 FIG. 18C).

If the end of the DPU database 448 is not reached, as determined at decision state 894, function 836 proceeds to a

decision state 900. At decision state 900, function 836 determines if the 10 digit telephone number of the DPU record just read is equal to the 10 digit telephone number of the DPU record stored at address one of the `dpu_list` (from state 890). If so, this indicates that two consecutive DPU records have the same telephone number but likely have different data in the other fields of the record. In this situation, function 836 advances to state 902 and increments the address variable `K` by one. Continuing at state 904, function 836 moves the current DPU record (from state 892) into the `dpu_list` at the incremented address `K` (state 902). Function 836 then loops back to state 892 to read the next record in the DPU database 448. If this new record also has the same 10 digit telephone number as the 10 digit telephone number of the record previously stored at address one of `dpu_list`, the new record will be added into `dpu_list` at the next address `K`. This loop (states 892, 894, 900, 902 and 904) continues until the 10 digit telephone number of the next DPU record does not equal the 10 digit telephone number of the record previously stored at address one of `dpu_list`, as determined at decision state 900. When this happens, function 836 moves to state 906 and the new current DPU record read at state 892 is moved into `old_dpu_rec`. Function 836 then returns at state 898 with one or more records saved in the `dpu_list` to process 456 (FIG. 18C). During any one call of function 836, the number of records returned in the `dpu_list` is equal to the number of DPU database records having the same 10 digit telephone number.

Referring now to FIG. 20, the Read Master Table function 838 will be further described. The Read Master Table function 838 was previously defined in FIG. 18C. The Master Table 454 is indexed by 10 digit telephone numbers in ascending order. Beginning at a start state 920, function 838 moves to state 922 and reads a record in the Master Table 454. As is well known in database technology, the first call of function 838 by process 456 (FIG. 18C) will read the first MT record, and subsequent calls of function 838 will read the next record after the record read from a previous call of the function. Proceeding to a decision state 924, function 838 determines if the end of the Master Table 454 is reached. If so, function 838 moves to state 926 and sets the variable `mt_eof` equal to one to signify the end of file condition. At the completion of state 926, or if it is determined that the end of file was not reached at decision state 924, function 838 returns at state 928 to process 456 (FIG. 18C).

Referring now to FIG. 21, the Write to Updated Master Table function 846, defined in process 456 (FIG. 18C), will be described. Function 846 begins at a start state 930 and moves to state 932 to write a Master Table record to the Updated Master Table 458. Proceeding to a return state 934, function 846 returns to process 456 (FIG. 18C).

In the preferred implementation, the Master Table 102/454 only contains the single most current record for each telephone number with the exception of businesses. For businesses, it is sometimes necessary to keep both a mailing address, such as a PO Box, and a physical address Spatial Key. It would be obvious to one skilled in the art that the Master Table Update process 456 could be modified to write disconnected telephone numbers to create a historical Master Table with multiple records for each telephone number.

While the above detailed description has shown, described, and pointed out the fundamental novel features of the invention as applied to various embodiments, it will be understood that various omissions and substitutions and changes in the form and details of the system illustrated may

be made by those skilled in the art, without departing from the spirit of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing information associated with an initiating party to an advertiser, the method comprising:
 - capturing a party identifier of an initiating party during real-time communications to a network address of a vanity advertiser;
 - determining a linkage key associated with the party identifier;
 - indexing the determined linkage key into at least one linkage key indexed database;
 - retrieving, via linkage key linkage, information associated with the initiating party; and
 - providing the retrieved information associated with the initiating party to the advertiser via a communications network.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications network comprises the Internet.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the vanity network address is a vanity telephone number.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the vanity network address is a toll-free ten-digit telephone number.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein determining a linkage key associated with the party identifier comprises determining the linkage key is the same as the party identifier.
6. An automated communication processing system, comprising:
 - a linkage key indexed database; and
 - a processor coupled to a communication network and configured to
 - capture a first location identifier,
 - determine a linkage key associated with the first location identifier,
 - index the determined linkage key into said linkage key indexed database to retrieve information associated with the first location identifier,
 - receive a communication network address associated with a recipient, and
 - communicate the retrieved information associated with the first location identifier to the communication network address.
7. The system defined in claim 6, wherein the processor captures the first location identifier during a communication session.
8. The system defined in claim 7, wherein the communication session comprises a telephone call.
9. The system defined in claim 7, wherein the communication session comprises an Internet session.
10. The system defined in claim 6, wherein the communication network address comprises a facsimile telephone number.
11. The system defined in claim 6, wherein the communication network address comprises a modem telephone number.
12. The system defined in claim 6, wherein the communication network address comprises an electronic-mail address.
13. The system defined in claim 6, wherein the communication network address comprises an Internet address.
14. An automated communication processing system, comprising:
 - a linkage key indexed database;
 - a processor coupled to a communication network and configured to
 - capture a first location address,

determine a linkage key associated with the first location address, and

index the determined linkage key into said linkage key indexed database to retrieve information associated with the first location address; and a communications server interconnecting the processor and the communication network and configured to receive a communication network address associated with a recipient, and communicate the retrieved information associated with the first location address to the communication network address.

15. The system defined in claim 14, wherein the processor captures the first location address during a telephone call.

16. The system defined in claim 14, wherein the processor captures the first location address during network communication.

17. The system defined in claim 16, wherein the network communication includes an Internet session.

18. The system defined in claim 14, wherein the communication network address comprises a facsimile telephone number.

19. The system defined in claim 14, wherein the communication network address comprises a modem telephone number.

20. The system defined in claim 14, wherein the communication network address comprises an electronic-mail address.

21. The system defined in claim 14, wherein the communication network address comprises an Internet address.

22. In a communication network, a method of retrieving information associated with a first party during communication processing, the method comprising:

supplying a first party identifier associated information database created from at least a master table and a key to information database, the master table including first party identifiers and associated information keys, the information database including keys and associated information, wherein creating the first party identifier associated information database comprises:

- (a) performing a computerized analysis of the keys in the master table and the keys in the key to information database, and
- (b) linking first party identifiers in the master table with associated information in the key to information database;

capturing a first party identifier over a communication network;

indexing the first party identifier into the first party identifier associated information database;

retrieving information associated with the indexed first party identifier from the first party identifier associated information database; and

communicating the retrieved information associated with the first party identifier to at least one recipient over the communication network.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the retrieved information associated with the first party identifier is a first party provided identifier; a first party provided telephone number; a DNIS number; an ANI number; a caller ID number; a spatial key of a first party identifier; a list of one or more locations servicing the first party with a name and address of the servicing location and a distance to the location; days and hours of operation for one or more servicing locations; USPS CASS certified address of the first party identifier; latitude and longitude associated with the first party identifier.

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fier; latitude and longitude associated with the servicing location address; driveable directions from a location of the first party identifier to a servicing location; driveable directions from a servicing location to a location of the first party identifier; a map showing the location of the first party identifier, the servicing location and a street network between the location of the first party identifier and the servicing location; micro directions for the servicing location; servicing location daily specials; servicing location product availability, information and pricing; servicing location special events and start times; household information associated with the first party identifier; individual information associated with the first party identifier; business location information associated with the first party identifier; government location information associated with the first party identifier; business financial information associated with the first party identifier; geographic information associated with the first party identifier; property information associated with the first party identifier; or vanity advertiser product announcements and promotions.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the first party identifier comprises a physical address.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the physical address comprises a street address.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein the physical address comprises a coordinate on the earth.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the coordinate on the earth comprises a latitude and longitude coordinate pair.

28. The method of claim 22, wherein the first party identifier comprises a telephone number.

29. The method of claim 22, wherein the first party identifier comprises an Internet address.

30. The method of claim 22, wherein the first party identifier comprises an electronic-mail address.

31. The method of claim 22, wherein the communication network comprises a voice and data network.

32. The method of claim 22, wherein the communication network comprises a wireless network.

33. The method of claim 22, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing information provided by the communication network.

34. The method of claim 22, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing key entry data from the first party.

35. The method of claim 22, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing key entry data from an operator in response to a communication from the first party.

36. The method of claim 22, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing information from a voice recognition unit.

37. The method of claim 22, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises translating handwritten information into digital data.

38. In a communication network, a method of retrieving and providing information associated with a first party during communication processing, the method comprising: supplying a first party identifier associated information database created from at least a master table and a key to information database, the master table including first party identifiers and associated information keys, the information database including keys and associated information, wherein creating the first party identifier associated information database comprises:

- (a) performing a computerized analysis of the keys in the master table and the keys in the key to information database, and
- (b) linking first party identifiers in the master table with associated information in the key to information database;

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receiving an information request over a communication network from the first party;

capturing a first party identifier;

indexing the first party identifier into the first party identifier associated information database;

retrieving information associated with the indexed first party identifier from the first party identifier associated information database; and

responding to the information request based on the retrieved information associated with the first party identifier.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein the retrieved information associated with the first party identifier is a first party provided identifier; a first party provided telephone number; a DNIS number; an ANI number; a caller ID number; a spatial key of a first party identifier; a list of one or more locations servicing the first party with a name and address of the servicing location and a distance to the location; days and hours of operation for one or more servicing locations; USPS CASS certified address of the first party identifier; latitude and longitude associated with the first party identifier; latitude and longitude associated with the servicing location address; driveable directions from a location of the first party identifier to a servicing location; driveable directions from a servicing location to a location of the first party identifier; a map showing the location of the first party identifier, the servicing location and a street network between the location of the first party identifier and the servicing location; micro directions for the servicing location; servicing location daily specials; servicing location product availability, information and pricing; servicing location special events and start times; household information associated with the first party identifier; individual information associated with the first party identifier; business location information associated with the first party identifier; government location information associated with the first party identifier; business financial information associated with the first party identifier; geographic information associated with the first party identifier; property information associated with the first party identifier; or vanity advertiser product announcements and promotions.

40. The method of claim 38, wherein the first party identifier comprises a physical address.

41. The method of claim 40, wherein the physical address comprises a street address.

42. The method of claim 40, wherein the physical address comprises a coordinate on the earth.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein the coordinate on the earth comprises a latitude and longitude coordinate pair.

44. The method of claim 38, wherein the first party identifier comprises a telephone number.

45. The method of claim 38, wherein the first party identifier comprises an Internet address.

46. The method of claim 38, wherein the first party identifier comprises an electronic-mail address.

47. The method of claim 38, wherein the communication network comprises a voice and data network.

48. The method of claim 38, wherein the communication network comprises a wireless network.

49. The method of claim 38, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing information provided by the communication network.

50. The method of claim 38, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing key entry data from the first party.

51. The method of claim 38, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing key entry data from an operator in response to a communication from the first party.

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52. The method of claim 38, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing information from a voice recognition unit.

53. The method of claim 38, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises translating handwritten information into digital data.

54. In a communication network, a method of retrieving information associated with a first party during communication processing, the method comprising:

receiving an information request over a communication network from the first communicating party;

capturing a first party identifier of a first communicating party;

determining a linkage key associated with the first party identifier;

indexing the determined linkage key into at least one linkage key indexed database;

retrieving, via linkage key linkage, information associated with the first party identifier; and

responding to the information request based on the retrieved information associated with the first party identifier.

55. The method of claim 54, wherein the retrieved information associated with the first party identifier is a first party provided identifier; a first party provided telephone number; a DNIS number; an ANI number; a caller ID number; a spatial key of a first party identifier; a list of one or more locations servicing the first party with a name and address of the servicing location and a distance to the location; days and hours of operation for one or more servicing locations; USPS CASS certified address of the first party identifier; latitude and longitude associated with the first party identifier; latitude and longitude associated with the servicing location address; driveable directions from a location of the first party identifier to a servicing location; driveable directions from a servicing location to a location of the first party identifier; a map showing the location of the first party identifier, the servicing location and a street network between the location of the first party identifier and the servicing location; micro directions for the servicing location; servicing location daily specials; servicing location product availability, information and pricing; servicing location special events and start times; household information associated with the first party identifier; individual information associated with the first party identifier; business location information associated with the first party identifier; government location information associated with the first party identifier; business financial information associated with the first party identifier; geographic information associated with the first party identifier; property information associated with the first party identifier; or vanity advertiser product announcements and promotions.

56. The method of claim 54, wherein the first party identifier comprises a physical address.

57. The method of claim 56, wherein the physical address comprises a street address.

58. The method of claim 56, wherein the physical address comprises a coordinate on the earth.

59. The method of claim 58, wherein the coordinate on the earth comprises a latitude and longitude coordinate pair.

60. The method of claim 54, wherein the first party identifier comprises a telephone number.

61. The method of claim 54, wherein the first party identifier comprises an Internet address.

62. The method of claim 54, wherein the first party identifier comprises an electronic-mail address.

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63. The method of claim 54, wherein the communication network comprises a voice and data network.

64. The method of claim 54, wherein the communication network includes a wireless network.

65. The method of claim 54, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing information provided by the communication network.

66. The method of claim 54, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing key entry data from the first party.

67. The method of claim 54, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing key entry data from an operator in response to a communication from the first party.

68. The method of claim 54, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises capturing information from a voice recognition unit.

69. The method of claim 54, wherein capturing the first party identifier comprises translating handwritten information into digital data.

70. A method of updating a master database for use in a communication network, the master database including first party identifiers linked to information associated with the first party identifiers, the method comprising:

capturing an identifier of a first party communicating over a network;

determining if a master database including a plurality of first party identifiers linked to information associated with the plurality of first party identifiers requires updating; and

if the master database requires updating then

determining a linkage key associated with the captured identifier,

linking via the linkage key to a second database to obtain information associated with the captured identifier, and

updating the master database with obtained information associated with the captured identifier.

71. The method of claim 70, wherein determining if the master database requires updating includes evaluating whether the master database contains acceptable information associated with the captured identifier.

72. The method of claim 71, wherein evaluating whether the master database contains acceptable information associated with the captured identifier comprises determining if the master database does not contain acceptable information if the master database does not contain a record indexed by the captured identifier.

73. The method of claim 71, wherein evaluating whether the master database contains acceptable information associated with the captured identifier comprises determining if an existing record indexed by the captured identifier contains valid data.

74. The method of claim 70, wherein updating the master database with information associated with the captured identifier comprises adding a record indexed by the first party identifier to the master database.

75. The method of claim 70, wherein updating the master database with information associated with the captured identifier comprises modifying an existing record indexed by the first party identifier in the master database.

76. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key comprises obtaining an address associated with the first party and assigning a linkage key based on the address.

77. The method of claim 76, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises obtaining an address using a voice recognition unit.

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78. The method of claim 76, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises obtaining an address using an operator.

79. The method of claim 76, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises prompting a user to provide the address.

80. The method of claim 76, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises validating the obtained address.

81. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises standardizing the address.

82. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises coding the address with a delivery point code (DPC).

83. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises ZIP+4 coding the address.

84. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises coordinate coding the address.

85. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises latitude and longitude coordinate coding the address.

86. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key comprises obtaining a telephone number associated with the first party and assigning a linkage key based on the telephone number.

87. The method of claim 70, wherein determining a linkage key comprises an operator with an input/output device connected to the communication network.

88. The method of claim 70, wherein the information associated with the first party identifier is a service location identifier.

89. The method of claim 88, wherein the service location identifier is a business telephone number.

90. The method of claim 88, wherein the service location identifier is a store fax number.

91. The method of claim 88, wherein the service location identifier is a business address.

92. The method of claim 88, wherein the service location identifier is a business Internet address.

93. The method of claim 88, wherein the service location identifier is a business electronic mail address.

94. The method of claim 70, wherein obtaining an address associated with the captured identifier comprises using a voice recognition unit.

95. The method of claim 70, wherein obtaining an address associated with the captured identifier comprises transferring to an operator.

96. A method of updating a master database for use in a communication network, the master database including first party identifiers linked to information associated with the first party identifiers, the method comprising:

capturing an identifier of a first party communicating over a network;

determining if a master database including a plurality of first party identifiers linked to information associated with the first party identifiers requires updating; and if the master database requires updating then

obtaining an address associated with the captured identifier,

obtaining information associated with the captured identifier by using the address as input to an automated process, and

updating the master database with the obtained information associated with the captured identifier.

97. The method of claim 96, wherein determining if the master database requires updating includes evaluating whether the master database contains acceptable information associated with the captured identifier.

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98. The method of claim 96, wherein evaluating whether the master database contains acceptable information associated with the captured identifier comprises determining the master database does not contain acceptable information if the master database does not contain a record indexed by the captured identifier.

99. The method of claim 96, wherein evaluating whether the master database contains acceptable information associated with the captured identifier comprises determining if an existing record indexed by the captured identifier contains valid data.

100. The method of claim 96, wherein updating the master database with information associated with the captured identifier comprises adding a record indexed by the first party identifier to the master database.

101. The method of claim 96, wherein updating the master database with information associated with the captured identifier comprises modifying an existing record indexed by the first party identifier in the master database.

102. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key comprises obtaining an address associated with the first party and assigning a linkage key based on the address.

103. The method of claim 102, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises obtaining an address using a voice recognition unit.

104. The method of claim 102, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises obtaining an address using an operator.

105. The method of claim 102, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises prompting a user to provide the address.

106. The method of claim 102, wherein obtaining an address associated with the first party comprises validating the obtained address.

107. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises standardizing the address.

108. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises coding the address with a delivery point code (DPC).

109. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises ZIP+4 coding the address.

110. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises coordinate coding the address.

111. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key further comprises latitude and longitude coordinate coding the address.

112. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key comprises obtaining a telephone number associated with the first party and assigning a linkage key based on the telephone number.

113. The method of claim 96, wherein determining a linkage key comprises an operator with an input/output device connected to the communication network.

114. The method of claim 96, wherein the information associated with the first party identifier is a service location identifier.

115. The method of claim 114, wherein the service location identifier is a business telephone number.

116. The method of claim 114, wherein the service location identifier is a store fax number.

117. The method of claim 114, wherein the service location identifier is a store address.

118. The method of claim 114, wherein the service location identifier is a business Internet address.

119. The method of claim 114, wherein the service location identifier is a business electronic mail address.

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120. The method of claim 96, wherein obtaining an address associated with the captured identifier comprises using a voice recognition unit.

121. The method of claim 96, wherein obtaining an address associated with the captured identifier comprises transferring to an operator.

122. A method of updating a database during network communication and subsequently retrieving the information, the method comprising:

capturing an identifier of a first party during network communication;

determining if a master database including a plurality of first party identifiers linked to information associated with the plurality of first party identifiers requires updating;

if the master database requires updating then determining a linkage key associated with the captured identifier,

linking via the linkage key to a second database to obtain information associated with the captured identifier, and

updating the master database with information associated with the captured identifier;

recapturing the identifier of the first party during network communication;

retrieving updated information associated with the recaptured identifier from the master database; and communicating the retrieved information associated with the recaptured identifier to at least one recipient.

123. The method of claim 122, wherein determining if the master database requires updating includes evaluating whether the master database contains acceptable information associated with the captured identifier.

124. A method of selecting second entity information based on a first entity location and communicating the selected second entity information to the first entity during communication over a network, the method comprising:

capturing an identifier of a first entity communicating over a network, the identifier providing location information related to the first entity;

selecting at least one second entity from a database, the database including information identifying a plurality of second entities and second entity locations, based on both the location information related to the first entity and second entity location information from the database; and

communicating information related to the at least one selected second entity over the network to the first entity.

125. The method of claim 124, wherein the identifier of the first entity is a telephone number.

126. The method of claim 124, wherein the identifier of the first entity is an address.

127. The method of claim 124, wherein the identifier of the first entity is a coordinate location.

128. The method of claim 124, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises service location name information.

129. The method of claim 124, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises service location address information.

130. The method of claim 124, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises service location telephone number information.

131. The method of claim 124, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises

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distance information based on the first entity location information and the location of the at least one selected second entity.

132. The method of claim 124, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises a map between the first entity location and the location of the at least one selected second entity.

133. The method of claim 124, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises driving directions between the first entity location and the location of the at least one selected second entity.

134. The method of claim 124, wherein capturing the identifier of the first entity during network communication comprises capturing a telephone number of a caller calling a vanity number related to the at least one selected second entity.

135. The method of claim 124, wherein capturing the identifier of the first entity during network communication comprises using a voice recognition unit.

136. The method of claim 124, wherein capturing the identifier of the first entity during network communication comprises capturing an address provided over a computer-telephone integrated (CTI) network.

137. The method of claim 124, wherein selecting at least one second entity from the database comprises indexing the identifier of the first entity into a master database comprising a plurality of records including second entity information indexed by first party identifiers.

138. The method of claim 137, wherein the identifier of the first entity comprises at least a portion of a telephone number.

139. The method of claim 124, wherein selecting at least one second entity from the database comprises using the identifier of the first entity to select a linkage key from a first database comprising a plurality of records including first party identifiers and associated linkage keys and then using the selected linkage key to select the at least one second entity from a second database comprising a plurality of records including linkage keys and associated second entity information.

140. A system for selecting second entity information based on a first entity location and communicating the selected second entity information to the first entity during network communication, the system comprising:

a capture module configured to capture an identifier of a first entity communicating over a network, the identifier providing location information related to the first entity;

a selecting module configured to select at least one second entity from a database, the database including information identifying a plurality of second entities and second entity locations, based on both the location information related to the first entity and second entity location information from the database; and

a network component configured to communicate information related to the at least one selected second entity to the first entity.

141. The system of claim 140, wherein the identifier of the first entity is a telephone number.

142. The system of claim 140, wherein the identifier of the first entity is an address.

143. The system of claim 140, wherein the identifier of the first entity is a coordinate location.

144. The system of claim 140, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises service location name information.

145. The system of claim 140, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises service location address information.

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146. The system of claim 140, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises service location telephone number information.

147. The system of claim 140, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises distance information based on the first entity location information and the location of the at least one selected second entity.

148. The system of claim 140, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises a map between the first entity location and the location of the at least one selected second entity.

149. The system of claim 140, wherein the information related to the at least one selected second entity comprises driving directions between the first entity location and the location of the at least one selected second entity.

150. The system of claim 140, wherein the capture module is additionally configured to capture a telephone number of a caller calling a vanity number related to the at least one selected second entity.

151. The system of claim 140, wherein the capture module is additionally configured to use a voice recognition unit.

152. The system of claim 140, wherein the capture module is additionally configured to capture an address provided over a computer-telephone integrated (CTI) network.

153. The system of claim 140, wherein the selecting module is additionally configured to index the identifier of the first entity into a master database comprising a plurality of records including second entity information indexed by first party identifiers.

154. The system of claim 153, wherein the identifier of the first entity comprises at least a portion of a telephone number.

155. The system of claim 140, wherein the selecting module is additionally configured to use the identifier of the first entity to select a linkage key from a first database comprising a plurality of records including first party identifiers and associated linkage keys and then use the selected linkage key to select the at least one second entity from a second database comprising a plurality of records including linkage keys and associated second entity information.

156. In a communications network, a method of providing information from the United States Postal Service Address Management System to a party during a communication session, the method comprising:

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capturing a first party identifier during a communications session;

determining an informational item from the United States Postal Service Address Management System by a computerized process based on the captured first party identifier; and

communicating the determined United States Postal Service informational item associated with the captured first party identifier to at least one party over the communications network.

157. The method of claim 156 wherein the first party identifier is a telephone number.

158. The method of claim 156 wherein the informational item is a United States Postal Service (USPS) standardized address.

159. The method of claim 156 wherein the informational item is a USPS ZIP+4.

160. The method of claim 156 wherein the informational item is a USPS Delivery Point Code (DPC).

161. In a communications network, a method of providing information from the United States Postal Service Address Management System to a party during a communication session, the method comprising:

supplying a database of first party identifiers linked to informational items from the United States Postal Service Address Management System;

capturing a first party identifier during a communications session;

retrieving an informational item from the database using the captured first party identifier; and

communicating the determined informational item associated with the captured first party identifier to at least one party over the communications network.

162. The method of claim 161 wherein the first party identifier is a telephone number.

163. The method of claim 161 wherein the informational item is a United States Postal Service (USPS) standardized address.

164. The method of claim 161 wherein the informational item is a USPS ZIP+4.

165. The method of claim 161 wherein the informational item is a USPS Delivery Point Code (DPC).

* * * * *



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 [45] **Date of Patent:** **Feb. 17, 1998**

[54] **METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR
 ACTIVATING TELEPHONE SERVICES IN
 RESPONSE TO SPEECH**

[75] **Inventors:** George J. Vysotsky, Riverdale, N.Y.;
 Ayman O. Asadi, Aliso Viejo, Calif.;
 David M. Lubensky, New Milford,
 Conn.; Vijay R. Raman, Greenwich,
 Conn.; Jayant M. Naik, Stamford,
 Conn.

[73] **Assignee:** NYNEX Science & Technology, White
 Plains, N.Y.

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[58] **Field of Search** 379/67, 88, 89,
 379/201, 189, 199, 188, 91, 79, 84, 216,
 361; 381/41, 42, 43; 395/2.55, 2.56, 2.84,
 2.81, 2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.79

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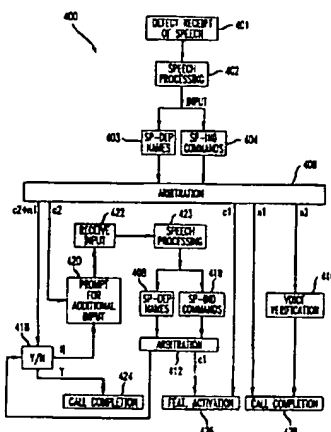
Primary Examiner—Harry S. Hong

Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Michaelson & Wallace; Michael P. Straub; Peter L. Michaelson

[57] **ABSTRACT**

Methods and apparatus for activating telephone services in response to speech are described. A directory including names is maintained for each customer. A speaker dependent speech template and a telephone number for each name, is maintained as part of each customer's directory. Speaker independent speech templates are used for recognizing commands. The present invention has the advantage of permitting a customer to place a call by speaking a person's name which serves as a destination identifier without having to speak an additional command or steering word to place the call. This is achieved by treating the receipt of a spoken name in the absence of a command as an implicit command to place a call. Explicit speaker independent commands are used to invoke features or services other than call placement. Speaker independent and speaker dependent speech recognition are performed on a customer's speech in parallel. An arbiter is used to decide which function or service should be performed when an apparent conflict arises as a result of both the speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition step outputs. Stochastic grammars, word spotting and/or out-of-vocabulary rejection are used as part of the speech recognition process to provide a user friendly interface which permits the use of spontaneous speech. Voice verification is performed on a selective basis where security is of concern.

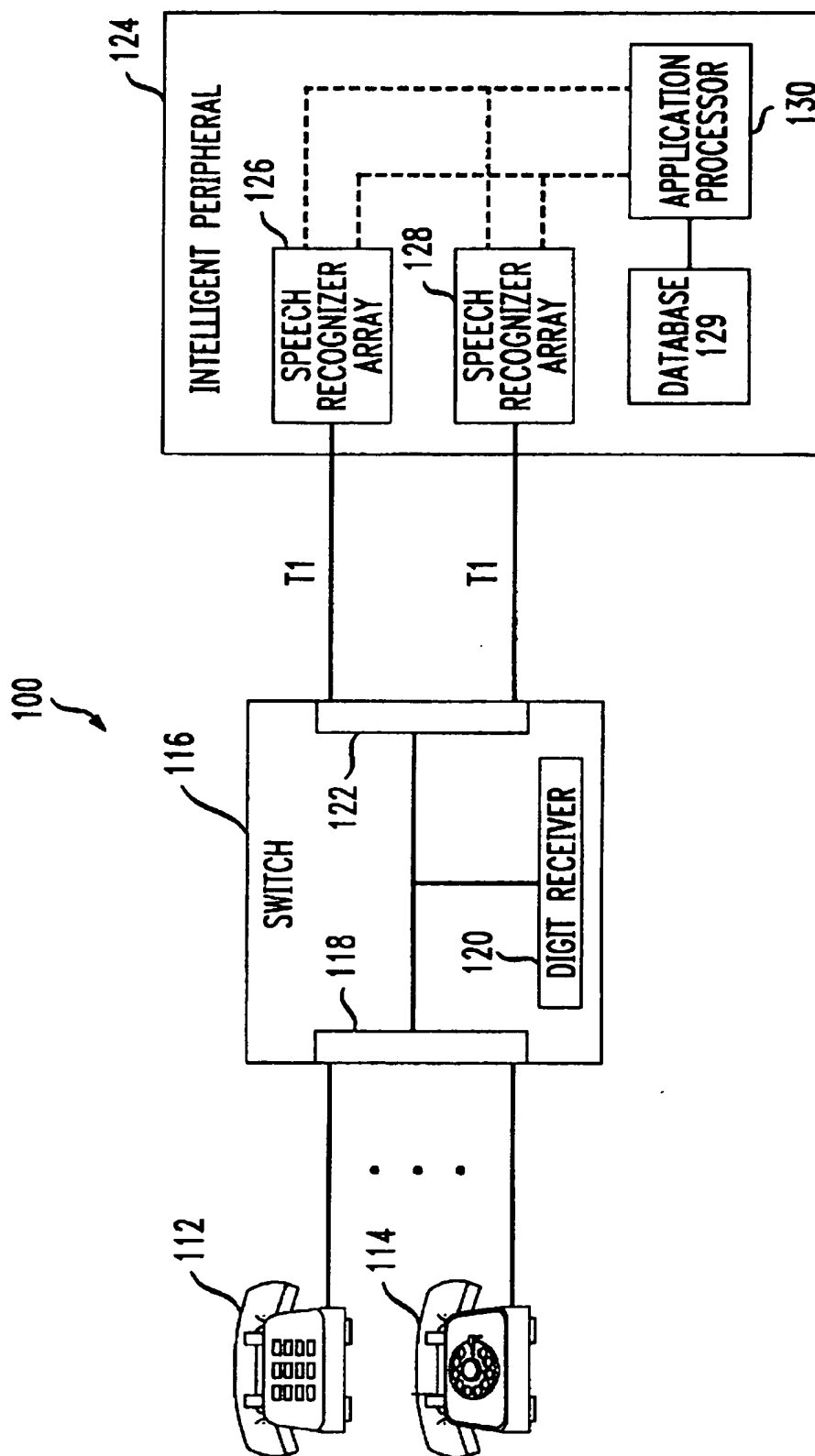
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FIG. 1



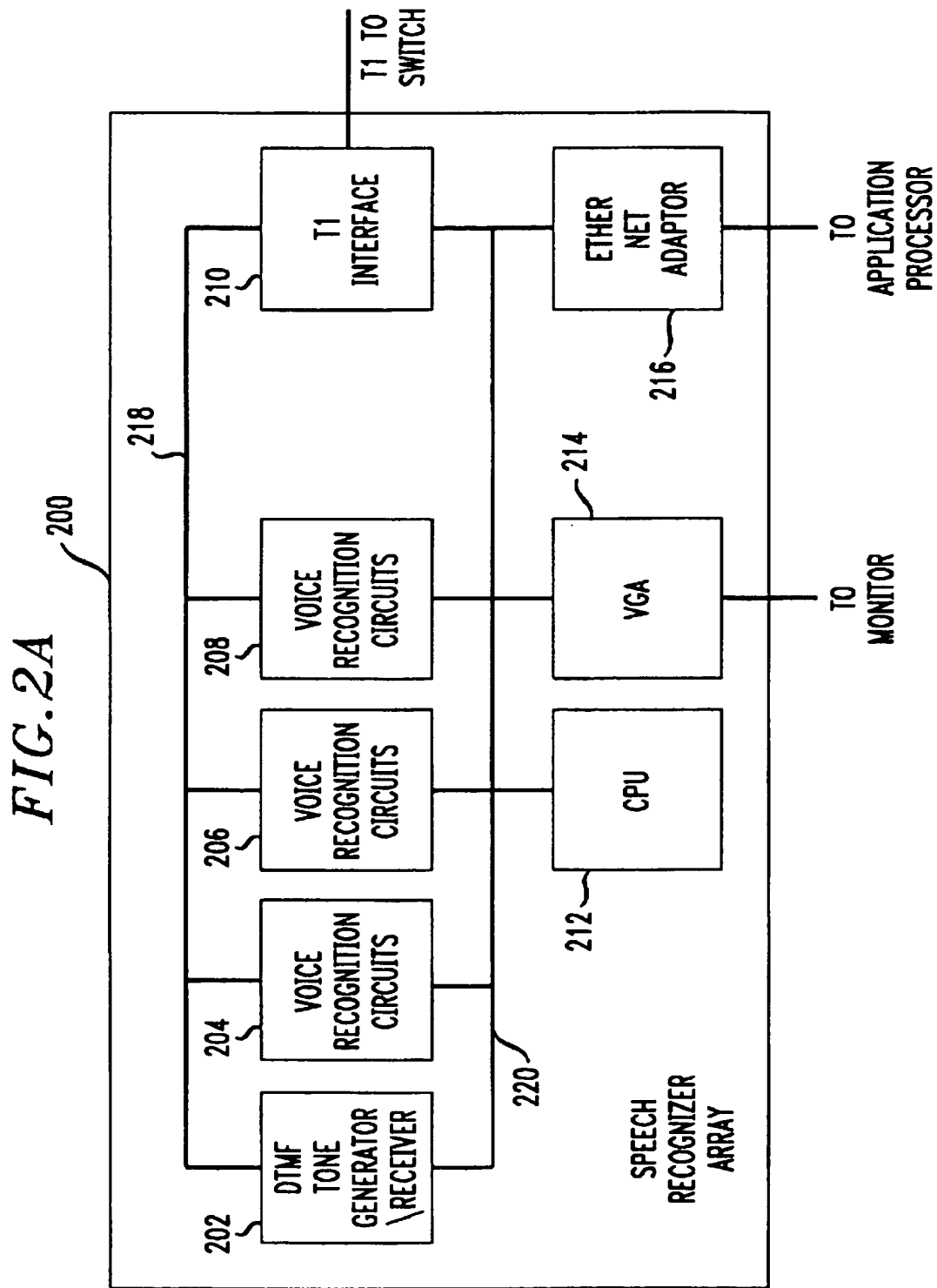


FIG. 2B

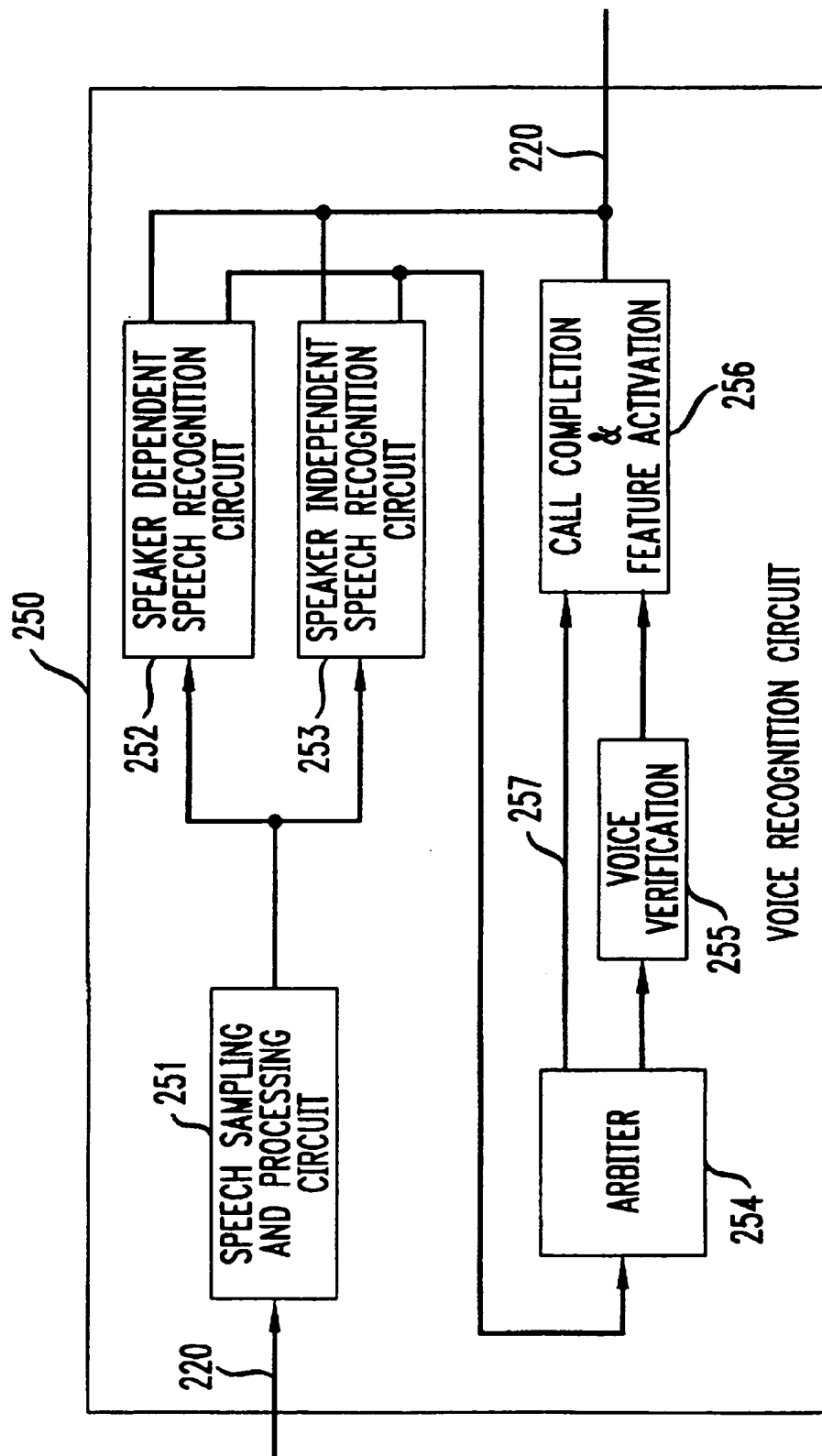


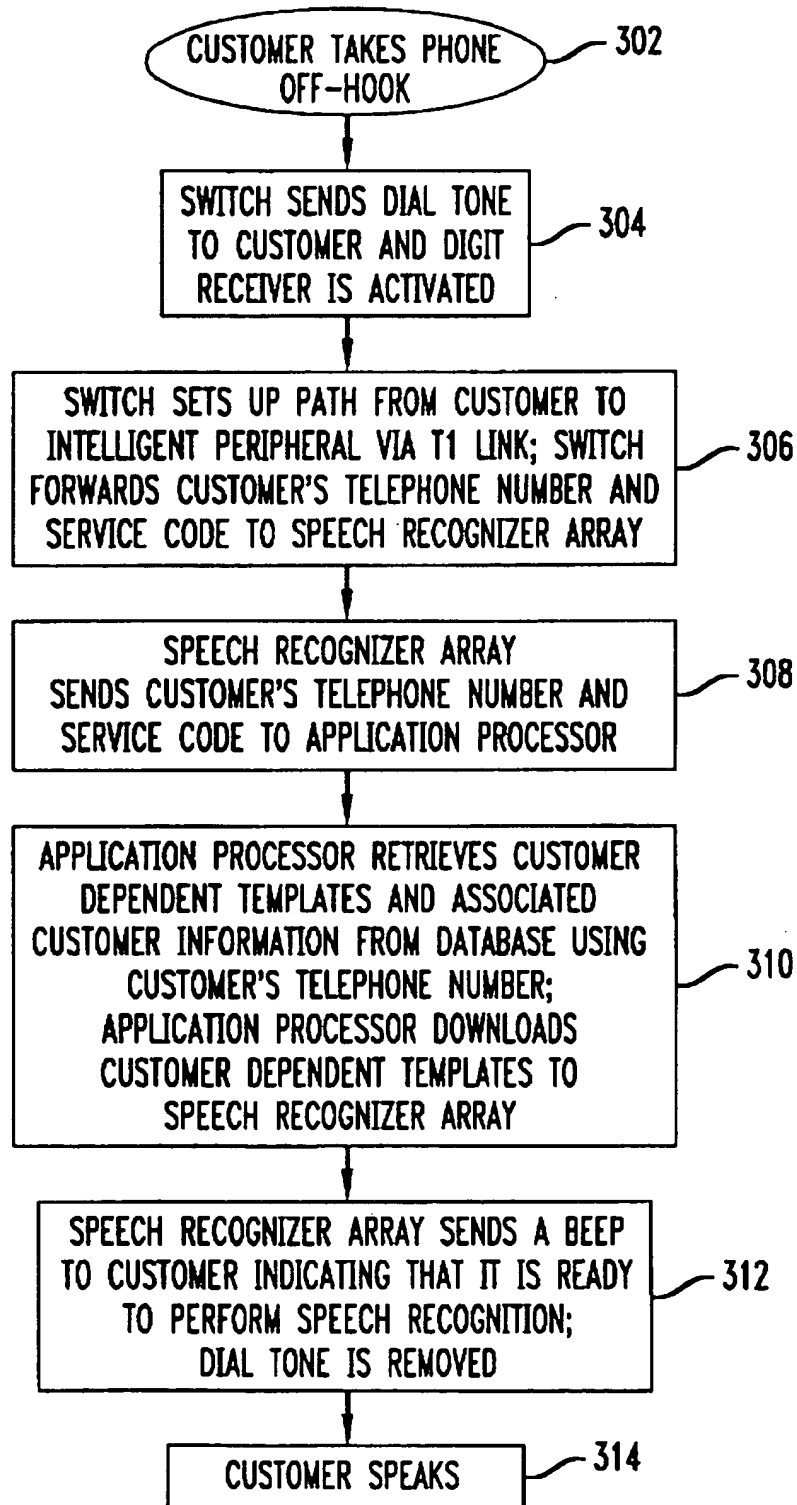
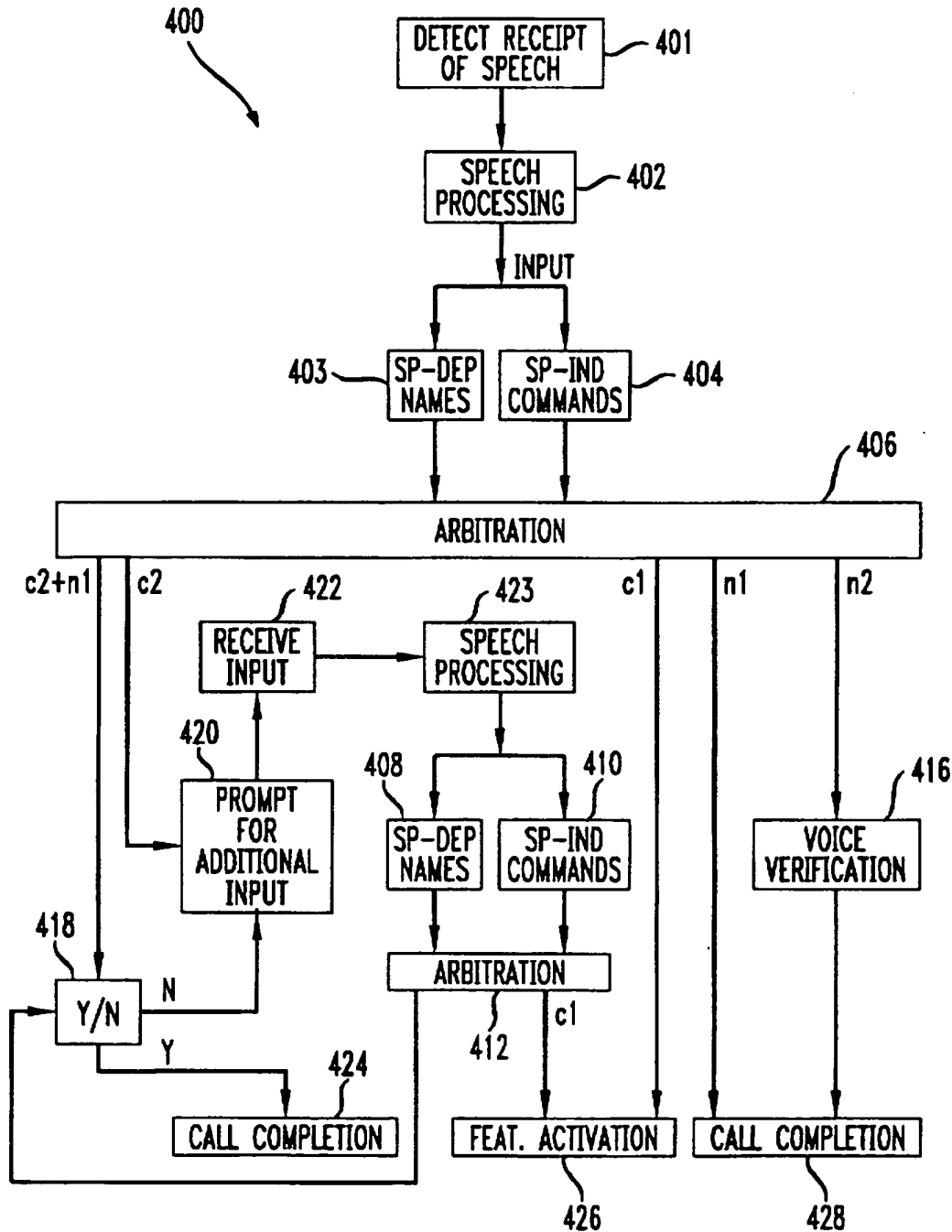
FIG. 3

FIG. 4



METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR ACTIVATING TELEPHONE SERVICES IN RESPONSE TO SPEECH

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to telephone systems and, more particularly, to methods and apparatus for activating telephone services in response to speech.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Telephones are used to provide a host of services in addition to basic calling services. Such telephone services include services such as repeat dialing and call return where security is not of concern. Telephone services also include banking and financial services where security is of concern.

Voice controlled dialing systems such as the one described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,165,095 permit a user to place a call verbally without knowing the number of the person being called. In accordance with the known system a user first speaks a command, e.g., the word "call" followed by a destination identifier. Once the command is identified using speaker independent voice recognition techniques, the system accesses speaker dependent or independent templates to recognize the destination identifier. The recognized destination identifier associated with the person making the call is then used to access a data base associated with the caller and to obtain therefrom a telephone number.

The known system uses both speaker independent and speaker dependent speech recognition.

Speaker dependent speech recognition uses a computer that has been "trained" to respond to the manner in which a particular person speaks. In general, the training involves one person speaking a sound to generate an analog speech input, converting the speech input into signal data, generating a template representing the sound, and indexing the template to appropriate response data, such as a computer instruction to perform an action. During real time applications, input data is compared to the user's set of templates and the best match results in an appropriate response.

Speaker independent speech recognition uses a computer that stores a composite template or cluster of templates that represent the same sound spoken by a number of different persons. The templates are derived from numerous samples of signal data to represent a wide range of pronunciations.

The requirement for steering words in the known system preceding, e.g., a destination identifier such as a name, places constraints on a user in terms of how a user must format a spoken request to place a call. Such format constraints require a user to speak in a manner that may be unnatural or uncomfortable for a user.

In order to provide voice controlled telephone services in a more user friendly manner, it is desirable that the need for commands or "steering words" be eliminated for basic calling functions. In addition, it is desirable that a user be able to place calls without excessive artificial constraints being placed on the words or sequence of words required to, e.g., place a call.

In addition to placing calls, it is desirable that other telephone services, e.g., call forwarding, repeat dial, call return, etc. also be available to a user through the use of speech control. It is also desirable that telephone services, e.g., banking transactions, involving matters requiring various degrees of security, also be supported without the need for a user to supply security codes or other personal identification number (PIN) information.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

The present invention is directed to telephone systems and, more particularly, to methods and apparatus for activating telephone services in response to speech.

In accordance with the present invention a directory of names and telephone numbers is maintained for each customer. A speaker dependent speech template is created for each name as it is added by a customer to the customer's personal telephone directory. The speaker dependent templates are stored in a data base which can be downloaded when a customer initiates a telephone call.

The present invention permits a user, e.g., customer, to place telephone calls using speech as opposed to telephone numbers without the use of steering words, e.g., the command "call" being spoken before a destination identifier such as the name of an individual to be called. It accomplishes this by interpreting speech which matches a name in a customer's personal directory, absent an additional command, as being an attempt to initiate a call. Thus, upon detecting a match between a spoken name and a name in the customer's directory, the telephone number associated with the name in the customer's personal directory is dialed absent the receipt of an explicit command.

Identification of the customer for purposes of accessing the customer's personal telephone directory may be achieved using the telephone number of the telephone used to initiate the telephone transaction, by using a calling card number to initiate the telephone call or by a plurality of other known customer identification methods.

In addition to speaker dependent speech templates the present invention uses a plurality of speaker independent templates. The speaker independent templates are used to identify commands, e.g., REDIAL, CALL RETURN, etc., yes/no responses; and/or speaker independent names such as, e.g., home, which may be used by a plurality of customers.

In accordance with the present invention, speaker dependent speech recognition, e.g., to identify names in a customer's telephone directory, is performed in parallel with speaker independent speech recognition. The speaker independent recognition is used to detect, e.g., explicit commands.

After both speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition is performed on a received utterance which may be a word, e.g., the name John, or a phrase, e.g., Call forwarding to Mary, the results of the speech recognition steps are analyzed. In the event that only a speaker dependent name is recognized, a call is placed to the phone number associated with the recognized name in the customer's personal directory. In this manner, a customer can place a call by simply speaking a name. Placing a call in this manner may be thought of as issuing an "implicit command" to dial since the system of the present invention will interpret a speaker dependent name, in the absence of other commands, as a command to dial the number associated with the name.

When a speaker independent command is detected, and no speaker independent name has been detected, the command is performed unless additional input is required, e.g., a name in the case of call forwarding, or security is of concern, such as in the case of message retrieval where the phone company is providing voice mail services. When security is of concern, a voice verification step is performed and the customer's identity is verified. Accordingly, the present invention provides a flexible system where voice

verification is performed on an as needed basis and not necessarily on all calls.

The system and method of the present invention supports commands which require additional inputs of either a name or another command. When such commands are detected by the speaker independent recognition step, a check is made to determine if the additional information was received as part of the same utterance in which the command was received. If it was, the command is processed accordingly. Otherwise, the needed additional input is requested and processed using speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition in parallel as described above.

Since both speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition is performed in parallel, both speech recognition steps may produce possibly valid recognition results which would result in a conflicting interpretation of the command or action to be performed. To resolve any disputes between the outcomes of the speech recognition steps, an arbiter is used to analyze the results and determine which course of action, e.g., command, is most likely the correct one. The course of action that is selected by the arbiter that will be followed in the case of potentially conflicting speech recognition results.

In order to assist the arbiter in determining which speech recognition result is mostly likely correct, in one embodiment of the present invention, the speech recognition steps produce a confidence value whenever they recognize a name or command. The confidence values associated with the outputs of the speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition steps are used together with additional information such as durational models of each word and the statistical probability of each name or command being received.

Accordingly, the method and apparatus of the present invention permits a user to place a call by speaking a name without the need to first speak a steering word. The present invention also provides for call security via the selective application of voice verification in telephone transactions where security is of concern.

The use of stochastic grammars, word spotting and out of vocabulary word rejection features permit a customer to place a call or control the use of telephone services using language that is much closer to natural speech than is possible with other less flexible systems. For example, in accordance with the present invention the instruction <Call forwarding to Mary> can also be spoken as <Uhm... please... I would like to activate call forwarding to... uhm... Mary, if I may>.

In addition to the above described features, many other features and embodiments of the present invention are described in detail below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a telephone system implemented in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2A is a block diagram of a speech recognizer array implemented in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2B is a block diagram of a voice recognition circuit suitable for use in the speech recognizer array illustrated in FIG. 2A.

FIG. 3 is a flow chart illustrating operation of the telephone system of FIG. 1 from the time a customer takes a phone off-hook to the time the customer speaks.

FIG. 4 is a flow chart illustrating operation of the telephone system of FIG. 1 as speech is received and processed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As discussed above, the present invention relates to methods and apparatus for providing voice controlled telephone services. FIG. 1 illustrates a telephone system 100 which provides speech controlled telephone services in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The telephone system 100 comprises a plurality of telephones 112, 114 which are coupled to a switch 116. The switch 116 includes a telephone interface 118, a digit receiver 120 and a T1 interface 122. The telephone interface 118 is used to couple the telephones 112, 114 to the digit receiver 120 and the T1 interface 122.

The digit receiver 120 monitors signals received via the interface 118 and/or T1 interface 122 to detect DTMF tones representing a destination telephone number. Upon detecting DTMF tones representing a destination telephone number, the digit receiver 120 routes the call in response to the DTMF tones, to the destination represented by the DTMF tones. The call is routed via, e.g., a telephone network coupled to the switch 116.

The T1 interface 122 is coupled to an intelligent peripheral 124 via first and second T1 links. As is known in the art, each T1 link is capable of handling 24 separate voice channels.

The intelligent peripheral 124 is used to control the switch 116, e.g., to place a call in response to speech. Communication of switch control information between the intelligent peripheral 124 and the switch 116 is conducted in accordance with a method described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 08/267,792 filed Jun. 28, 1994 which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference.

The intelligent peripheral 124 includes first and second speech recognizer arrays 126, 128, an application processor 130, and a database 129. The first and second speech recognizer arrays 126, 128 are coupled to the first and second T1 links, respectively, and to the application processor 130. The application processor 130, in turn, is coupled to a database 129, which includes, e.g., a customer list, a set of user dependent speech templates for each customer, a list of telephone numbers, and other information. While the intelligent peripheral 124, for exemplary purposes, is illustrated as including two speech recognizer arrays 126, 128 is to be understood that it may include any number of such arrays.

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, for each destination identifier for which a speech template is stored in the database 129, there is also stored a recording of the destination identifier and a telephone number associated with the destination identifier. The recording is used as part of a confirmation message played back to the customer after a match with a template is detected. The telephone number is used to place the call.

Referring now to FIG. 2A, there is illustrated an exemplary speech recognizer array 200 which may be used as the first and second speech recognizer arrays 126, 128.

The speech recognizer array comprises a T1 interface 210, first through third voice recognition circuits 204, 206, 208, a DTMF tone generator/receiver circuit 202, a central processing unit 212, a VGA graphics card 214 which is coupled to a monitor, and an Ethernet adapter 216. The Ethernet adapter 216 is used to couple the speech recognizer array 200 to the application processor 130.

The T1 interface card 210 is coupled to the T1 link and is responsible for supplying voice channels to the voice rec-

ognition circuits 204, 206, 208 and the DTMF tone generator circuit 202 via a first data bus 218, e.g., a MITEL ST-Bus™ bus. A second bus 220, which is a host computer bus, e.g., an AT-bus is coupled to the T1 interface, first through third voice recognition circuits 204, 206, 208, DTMF generator 202, CPU 212, graphics card 214 and Ethernet adapter 216.

The T1 interface 210 routes each of the 24 voice channels of the T1 link to one of the three voice recognition circuits 204, 206, 208. In the illustrated embodiment, each voice recognition card 204, 206, 208 handles 8 voice channels. The DTMF tone generator/receiver 202 is responsible for generating the DTMF tones required to place a call and for detecting DTMF tones, e.g., *99, representing a specific mode of operation, e.g., directory mode. The CPU 212 is responsible for controlling the operation of the various components of the speech recognizer array and the transfer of data to and from the application processor 130 via the Ethernet adapter 216. Operation of the voice recognition circuits 204, 206, 208 will be discussed in detail below.

A voice recognition circuit 250 suitable for use as one of the voice recognition circuits of FIG. 2A, is illustrated in FIG. 2B. The voice recognition circuit 250 comprises a speech sampling and processing circuit 251 which is coupled to the voice bus 220 for receiving speech therefrom. The output of the speech sampling and processing circuit 251 is coupled to the inputs of a speaker dependent speech recognition circuit 252 and a speaker independent speech recognition circuit 253. The speech recognition circuits 252, 253 are coupled to the data bus 220. via the data bus 220 speech recognition templates can be transferred between the data base 129 and the speech recognition circuits 252, 253 through the use of the application processor 130. The outputs of the speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition circuits 252, 253 are coupled to an arbiter 254.

The arbiter 254, in turn, is coupled to a call completion and feature activation circuit 256 by a line 257 and by a voice verification circuit 255. Using this arrangement, voice verification is performed selectively when, for security purposes, it is important to verify the identity of a caller before responding to a particular command.

The voice recognition circuit 250 may include additional feedback loops and circuits for requesting additional information from a caller as may be required depending on a particular application.

Referring now to FIG. 3, the operation of the telephone system 100 will be described from the time a customer take a phone 112, 114 off-hook until the point where the customer speaks. As illustrated in FIG. 3, telephone system interaction with a customer begins when the customer takes the phone off-hook as represented by block 302. After the phone is taken off-hook system operation progresses to step 304. At this point, the switch 116 sends a dial tone to the customer and the digit receiver 120 is activated.

In the next step, step 306, the switch 116 sets up a path from the customer to the intelligent peripheral 124 via either of the first or second T1 links. Once the path between the switch 116 and intelligent peripheral 124 is established, the switch 116 forwards customer identification information, e.g., the customer's telephone number, and a service code to one of the speech recognizer arrays, e.g., the speech recognizer array 126.

Operation then proceeds to step 308. In step 308, the speech recognizer array 126 sends the customer's telephone number and service code to the application processor. The

application processor 130, in step 310, retrieves customer dependent speech templates and associated customer information from the database 129 using, e.g., the customer's telephone number as an index to the database 129. The application processor 130 downloads the retrieved customer dependent speech templates to the speech recognizer array 126. Other customer information, e.g., the types of or level of service to which the customer subscribes and the status of the customer's account, e.g., active or inactive, may be retrieved and downloaded as well.

Upon receiving the speaker dependent templates from the application processor 130, the speech recognizer array 126, in step 312, signals its readiness to perform speech recognition by removing the dial tone and sending a beep to the customer.

It should be noted that speaker independent templates, for, e.g., explicit commands, may be stored locally in the speech recognizer array 126 or downloaded from, e.g., the database 129. In as much as speaker independent templates are non-speaker dependent, there is no need to download a separate set of speaker independent templates for each individual customer.

Upon receiving the beep, the customer is expected to speak in order to, e.g., place a call. The customer's speaking is represented by step 314. The speech is conveyed to the speech recognizer 126 via the switch 116 and a T1 link.

Operation of the telephone system 100 will now be described with reference to FIG. 4 which illustrates the method of the present invention for processing speech and performing operations in response thereto. The flow chart 400 of FIG. 4 comprises a series of function blocks or steps performed in accordance with the present invention.

The method of the present invention, represented by the steps of FIG. 4, combines several speech recognition and speaker verification steps. The method of the present invention allows customers to pick up the phone and say a name, e.g., "John", to call John, or pick up the phone and say a command or function such as "Call return", to activate or have the desired service or function performed.

Examples of implicit and explicit commands which may be used to invoke or cancel various functions and/or services, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, are listed below. Each possible command is listed on a separate line. Various ways of invoking the same function or service using one or more different commands are listed on the same line. At the end of each line, in parenthesis, is a type identifier that is used to identify the command type.

SD NAME, e.g. "John"		(n1)
REPEAT DIALING;	REDIAL	(c1)
CALL RETURN;	RETURN CALL	(c1)
CALL TRACE;	TRACE CALL	(c1)
CALL FORWARDING;	FORWARDING (MY) CALLS	(c2)
VOICE DIALING		(n2)
MESSAGES;	VOICE MESSAGES	(n2)
CALL ANSWERING		(n2)
CANCEL REDIAL;	CANCEL REPEAT DIALING	(c1)
CANCEL CALL FORWARDING		(c1)
CANCEL CALL RETURN;	CANCEL RETURN CALL	(c1)
REVIEW		(c1)
PHONE		(c1)

where: VOICE DIALING is an explicit command used to enter a directory mode of operation during which a customer may make modifications to the customer's personal voice dialing directory.

The command type identifiers are as follows:

n1—speaker dependent name or command

n2—speaker independent name or command

c1—type 1 command

c2—type 2 command which requires further input of a name or command

As will be discussed below, a distinctive feature of the present invention is that speaker independent speech recognition of commands are performed in parallel with speaker dependent recognition of names from the individual customer's personal telephone directory. This results in two different speech recognition processes being performed on the same speech simultaneously. In such an embodiment, a customer may say an utterance from either of the two vocabularies without explicitly indicating which vocabulary is being used. Performing both speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition in parallel eliminates the need to use of an explicit command or steering word as required in the prior art systems, to place a call.

Referring now to the flow chart 400 of FIG. 4, it can be seen that in accordance with the present invention, speech processing begins in step 401 with the detection of the receipt of speech by, e.g., the voice recognition circuit 204. In step 402, the received speech is processed prior to performing speech recognition thereon.

In the exemplary embodiment, in step 402, the received speech, which was previously sampled at, e.g., 8 KHz by the switch 116, is divided into frames every 20 ms with a window of 30 ms. 10 LPC-based cepstra, 10 delta-cepstra, energy, and delta-energy are computed for every frame. The delta-cepstra are computed with a standard interpolation formula over a 5 frame window. In the exemplary embodiment, all speech features are quantized to 8 bits.

After speech processing is performed, speaker dependent speech recognition is performed in step 403. In parallel, e.g., at the same time, speaker independent speech recognition is also performed in step 404.

In the exemplary embodiment, both speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition are performed as is known in the art, using continuous density hidden Markov models. Speech recognition may be performed as described in the article by D. Lubensky, A. Asadi, and J. Naik, "Connected Digit Recognition Using Connectionist Probability Estimators and Mixture-Gaussian Densities", ICSLP-94, Yokohama, Japan, 1994, which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference. In the exemplary embodiment of the present invention, recognition is based on whole word models. However, it is also possible to perform speech recognition using any level of sub-word models as well.

As is known in the art prior to performing speech recognition, training is used to create speaker independent as well as speaker dependent word models.

The training required to build the speaker independent word models, i.e., templates, is accomplished in two steps. The first step computes a forced path alignment of training utterances. The training utterances may be, e.g., the commands set forth in the above table spoken by a plurality of individuals. In the second step, the mixtures of each state, where 4 mixtures per state are used, are updated from the alignments and a diagonal covariance matrix is computed for each mixture. The system uses speech data collected over a telephone network to train the word models, a 3-state silence model, and an 8 state out of vocabulary (OOV) model which is sometimes referred to as a garbage model. The OOV model is trained on a large amount of telephone speech that does not include the target vocabulary words.

The speaker independent recognition process is implemented using stochastic grammar built from target words, OOV words, and silence. The stochastic grammar is used to determine which word sequences are allowed. During speech recognition, a Viterbi search with pruning is performed to find the most likely word sequence. During the search, the distance between the features of the frames and the Gaussian mixtures of the states is computed and used to produce a confidence measure which indicates the likelihood that a match between one of templates representing a modeled command, function or service was successfully found.

The speaker dependent speech recognition process represented by step 403, involves identifying spoken names which correspond to names represented by templates in the customer's personal calling directory. The speaker dependent templates which were previously downloaded from the database 129 are used for this purpose.

The speaker dependent speech recognition process, like the speaker independent speech recognition process, is based on hidden Markov models (HMM) with the use of grammars. It also uses word spotting and out of vocabulary rejection in a completely configurable form.

A customer may add names or delete names from a speaker dependent directory by using explicit directory maintenance commands and menus to create and delete templates and records as desired.

In order to build HMM speaker dependent name models referred to as templates, in one embodiment, a single Gaussian mixture is used, with pooled covariance, and on-line mean estimation. The models are implemented from left to right, with no skips. The speaker dependent speech recognition process uses the same Viterbi search algorithm used for speaker independent speech recognition but with Euclidean distance as a metrics. The number of states per HMM model is quantized to 3 levels with, in one embodiment, the maximum number of states allowed being 20.

During speaker dependent speech recognition, speaker dependent garbage models are used for out of vocabulary rejection as well as word spotting. These garbage models are built on-line and, in the exemplary embodiment, modified every time the user's directory of names is changed e.g., during a directory maintenance mode of operation. Four garbage models are used in the exemplary embodiment. Three have numbers of states corresponding to the three durational values of the name models. The fourth one is a single state model. In addition, three single-state background, e.g., silence, models, tuned for different background conditions, are used. The grammar is shared by both the speech recognition and training process used to generate the templates used for speech recognition. The grammar can be modified by adjusting path probabilities to achieve various levels of word spotting and rejection.

In accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, when a user is in a directory maintenance mode of operation and a speaker dependent model for a name to be added to the customer's directory is being generated, two repetitions of the name spoken by the customer are required. The system of the present invention seeks a consistent pair of utterances before building a model, and additionally determines if the name is too similar to another name in the customer's directory to reduce the risk that the name will be miss-recognized due to the use of multiple similar names. In order to achieve this, a recognition pass is performed during the training process to assess the system's ability to properly detect the name being added to the directory.

The result of the speaker dependent speech recognition step 403 and speaker independent speech recognition step 404 is a sentence which comprises one or more descriptive strings, e.g., of a name, command, or both. Both speech recognition steps also produce time alignment information relating to the recognized words if the words are spoken in a sentence. This time alignment information is used to determine, in some cases, if arbitration is required. For example, if a name and a command are detected and the time alignment information indicates that they were spoken during the same time interval, as opposed to different time intervals, only the output of one of the speech recognition steps 403, 404 can be correct. In such a case, arbitration is used to decide which output should be used.

A confidence measure which indicates the likelihood that the results represent the correct identification of a word, name, command or other utterance is also produced as part of the speech recognition steps 403, 404. the confidence3 measures thus produced are used to ascertain which speech recognition step most likely produced the correct result when both recognition steps 403, 404 recognize, e.g., one or more words, names, or commands.

The outputs of both the speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition steps 403, 404 are supplied to the input of an arbitration step 406. The arbitration step 406 is used to arbitrate between the results of the two speech recognition steps 403, 404 in the event that the both detect a successful match, e.g., corresponding to speech which occurred in the same time interval.

The level of successful speech recognition depends on the ability of both the speaker dependent speech recognition (SDR) and speaker independent speech recognition (SIR) steps 403, 404 to effectively reject out of vocabulary (OOV) inputs thereby reducing or eliminating the need for arbitration to determine which output should be accepted as the correct one. For example, consider the following three possible outcomes:

SDR	SIR	RESULT
name	ovv	name
ovv	command	command
name	command	?

In the case of the first two outcomes, no arbitration is required since only one of the speech recognition steps found a match. However, in the third case, where both the SDR and SIR steps 403, 404 produce possible matches, arbitration is required to differentiate and select between the results.

In one test, 5.8% of all inputs required arbitration when inputs were names and 7.3% when the inputs were commands. These figures will vary depending on, e.g., particular word vocabularies. In the test, the difference in the need for arbitration was due, at least in part, to the fact that the name vocabularies used mostly comprised short first names, which are more frequently falsely detected using word spotting than are lengthier commands.

The confidence measures produced by the two speech recognition steps 403, 404 could be used as the sole basis for arbitrating between the results of the speech recognition processes with the output of the speech recognition process which produces the higher confidence measure being selected.

However, more sophisticated arbitration schemes may also be employed. Such schemes may use additional information derived from durational modeling of words in the

vocabulary as well as the statistic based probability of the occurrence of each command. It is expected that names will be received much more frequently than commands since, at the present time, people tend to primarily use telephones to place calls as opposed to e.g., request services such as call return.

In the exemplary embodiment, the arbitration scheme is implemented as a function of: 1) the recognition confidence measure produced by the SDR and SIR steps 403, 404 and 2) durational models of each word of a command and each name built during training.

While the above arbitration approach is used to select between the outputs of the SDR and SIR steps 403, 404, for most commands, in the case of type c2 commands where the grammar allows a speaker independent command and speaker dependent name to be spoken in one phrase, additional analysis may be used as part of the arbitration process. In such a case, score thresholding, duration checks, and/or scanning of time alignment can also be used as the part of the arbitration process to assist in distinguishing between the receipt of C2 commands and merely the receipt of a name intended to be used to place a call.

After the arbitration step is completed, the method of the present invention progress to the next level in the process illustrated in FIG. 4. The particular step, 418, 407, 416 to which the process proceeds depends on the type of name, command or combination thereof that was detected.

The branch c2+n1 in FIG. 4 represents progression from the arbitration step to a confirmation step 418. The C2+n1 path is followed in the event that a c2 type command and a speaker dependent name are detected together, e.g., when the customer says "FORWARD (MY) CALLS (TO) JOHN", where the words in parenthesis are not required but will not interfere with proper detection of the command and name because of the use of word spotting techniques and/or OOV rejection.

In step 418, the customer is played a confirmation message, e.g., "Do you wish to forward your calls to John?" where the name John is generated by playing back the recording of the name associated in the database 129 with the template that was used to identify the name John in the received speech. A verbal yes/no response is expected. In the event that a "yes" response is detected, e.g., using speaker independent speech recognition, the method progresses to step 424 and the call is completed with the customers calls being forwarded to the telephone number in the database 129 associated with the customer's template for the name John.

If however, a "no" response is detected in step 418 or no "yes" response is detected within a preselected period of time, the process progresses from step 418 to step 420 in which the customer is prompted for additional input, e.g., the name of the person to whom calls are to be forwarded when step 420 is being performed subsequent to step 418.

If, at step 406, it is determined that a c2 type command, e.g., a call forwarding command, has been received without the additional input of a name or command required, the process proceeds from step 406 to step 420 where the customer is prompted for the additional input required.

From step 420, the process proceeds to step 422 where the additional speech input is received and then step 423 where it is processed prior to performing speech recognition thereon.

SDR and SIR are performed on the processed speech in parallel in steps 408 and 410 in an attempt to detect a name in the customer's personal directory or a command. Arbitration step 412 is used to select between the results of the

SDR and SIR in the event that both steps 408, 410 result in detecting a possible valid input, e.g., a name or command. In the event that the arbitration step 412 determines that a speaker dependent name was received path n1 is taken from step to the confirmation step 418 where confirmation of the command, e.g., call forwarding, and destination, e.g., name, is requested prior to call completion.

If, in arbitration step 406, it is determined that a type c1 command has been received, e.g., a REPEAT DIALING, CALL RETURN, CANCEL REPEAT DIALING, CANCEL CALL RETURN, or REVIEW command, the process proceeds directly from the arbitration step 406 to feature activation step 426 where the operation associated with the command is performed.

If in arbitration step 406, it is determined that a type n1 phrase, e.g., a speaker dependent name has been received, and a type c2 command has not been received, the process proceeds from the arbitration step 406 to a call completion step 428. In the call completion step, the destination telephone number associated with the speaker dependent name that was detected is dialed and the recording of the name stored in the database 129 is played back to the customer as a confirmation message.

If in arbitration step 406, it is determined that a type n2 phrase has been detected, e.g., a speaker independent command such as a banking transaction command or a message retrieval command, the process proceeds to step 416 in which voice verification is performed. Various levels of voice verification may be used depending on the particular function being requested. For example, when a customer is seeking to perform a banking transaction, a higher degree of voice verification may be performed as compared to when a customer is merely seeking to receive voice messages.

The voice verification performed in step 416 may use any one of a plurality of known voice verification methods. In one exemplary embodiment the voice verification process uses a fixed text protocol and a voice password which is a digit string of 7-10 digits. The enrollment of the voice password is mediated by fixed grammar and speaker independent digit recognition which assures reliable word segmentation. Speaker specific voice verification models are generated at the time a customer's phone directory is initially created using the speech segmentation process described above.

The voice verification step includes speech sampling and processing that is the same as or similar to that performed in step 402 and may include the use of a spoken password. In the exemplary embodiment, voice feature vectors are transformed using discriminate training and principal component analysis in an attempt to produce the maximal separation between known true-speaker and impostor data distributions.

If the voice verification is successful in step 416 and the speaker's identity is thus confirmed, the speaker's reference model is updated to thereby adapt the customer's reference model to incremental changes in the speaker and the channel coupling the customer to the speech recognition array 126. Acceptance decision criteria may also be adapted to individual customers over time to improve the likelihood of a high true user acceptance rate while maintaining a high impostor rejection rate.

If the customer's identification is confirmed in the voice verification step 416, the process progresses to the call completion step 428 and the requested action, e.g., the stored messages are played. If however, the voice verification step 416 indicates that an impostor is attempting to place a call, the call is terminated or other appropriate action is taken.

In accordance with the present invention, the voice verification step 416 is invoked selectively, i.e., only when security or the caller's identity is of concern. Such an unobtrusive approach to providing security to telephone transactions may be used in any number of practical applications. For example, in a telephone banking application, some information can be provided to anybody, e.g., a bank may use a speech recognition system to respond to an inquiry Can I get your mortgage rates? without any security concerns. However, in the case of a telephone inquiry May I have my account balance? security is of concern and voice verification offers a method of providing the required security.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing a telephone service in response to speech of a caller, the method comprising the steps of:
 - identifying the caller;
 - accessing a database including speaker dependent speech recognition templates for a plurality of names;
 - performing a speaker dependent speech recognition operation on the speech using the speaker dependent speech recognition templates to detect a presence of one of the plurality of names in the speech;
 - performing speech recognition on the speech in order to detect a presence of an explicit command in the speech; and
 - upon detecting the presence of one of the plurality of names and failing to detect the presence of an explicit command in the speech, dialing a telephone number corresponding to the one of the plurality of names whose presence was detected.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of performing speech recognition on the speech in order to detect the presence of an explicit command includes the step of:
 - performing a speaker independent speech recognition operation on the speech.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the speaker dependent speech recognition operation and the speaker independent speech recognition operation are performed in parallel.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the explicit command may be a command of a first type which does not require the additional input of a name to be performed, the method further comprising the step of:
 - upon detecting the presence of one of the plurality of names as a result of the speaker dependent speech recognition operation and failing to detect a command of the first type:
 - performing an arbitration step to determine whether to respond to the detected command or to dial the telephone number corresponding to the detected one of the plurality of names.
5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the steps of:
 - generating a first confidence measure when performing the speaker dependent speech recognition operation and the presence of one of the plurality of names is detected, the first confidence measure being an indication of how likely the result of the speaker dependent speech recognition operation is correct;
 - generating a second confidence measure when performing the speaker independent speech recognition operation and the explicit command is detected, the second confidence measure being an indication of how likely the result of the speaker independent speech recognition operation is correct; and
 - using the first and second confidence measures to perform the arbitration step.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the arbitration step is performed as a function of durational models of names and commands and the statistical probability of the occurrence of the names and the commands.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the explicit command may be any one of a plurality of different types of explicit commands, and where the method further comprises the step of:

performing a voice verification operation to confirm the identity of the caller upon the detection of a preselected type of explicit command.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the preselected type of explicit command involves a financial transaction.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the preselected type of explicit command is a request for access to stored information.

10. The method of claim 3, wherein the explicit command whose presence is detected may be of a second type which requires the additional input of a name to be performed, the method further comprising the steps of:

determining if the explicit command whose presence was detected is of the second type; and

if the explicit command whose presence was detected is of the second type:

determining if the required name was detected by the speaker dependent speech recognition process;

if the required name was detected, performing an operation in response to the explicit command whose presence was detected and the detected name; and

if the required name was not detected, prompting the caller for additional input.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the second type of command is a call forwarding command.

12. A method of responding to speech from a caller, the method comprising the steps of:

performing a speaker dependent speech recognition operation on the speech to detect a presence of a name in the speech;

performing a speaker independent speech recognition operation on the speech in order to detect a presence of an explicit command in the speech, the speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition operations being performed in parallel;

upon detecting the presence of a name and failing to detect the presence of an explicit command in the speech;

dialing a telephone number corresponding to the name whose presence is detected; and

upon detecting the presence of a name and the presence of an explicit command, performing an arbitration step to determine whether to respond to the detected command or to dial the telephone number corresponding to the name whose presence is detected if the explicit command whose presence was detected is of a first type which does not require a name to be performed.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:

upon detecting the presence of a command of a second type;

performing a voice verification operation to check the identity of the caller.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein speaker dependent voice recognition and speaker independent voice recognition are performed using word spotting and out of vocabulary word rejection techniques.

15. A device for responding to a caller's speech, comprising:

means for performing speaker dependent speech recognition on the speech to detect the presence of a name in the speech;

means for performing speaker independent speech recognition on the speech to detect the presence of an explicit command in the speech, the means for performing speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition being coupled in parallel; and

means for dialing a telephone number corresponding to the name whose presence is detected, upon detecting the presence of a name and failing to detect the presence of an explicit command in the speech, coupled to the means for performing speaker independent and speaker dependent speech recognition.

16. The device of claim 15, further comprising:

an arbiter coupled to the means for performing speaker dependent and speaker independent speech recognition for receiving an output therefrom and for determining the action to be taken in response to the detection of names and commands.

17. The device of claim 16, further comprising a voice verification circuit coupled to the arbiter for selectively performing voice verification on the speech.

18. The device of claim 17, further comprising:

a database coupled to the means for performing speaker dependent speech recognition, the database including a plurality of speaker dependent speech recognition templates and telephone numbers, a single telephone number being associated with each speaker dependent speech recognition template.

19. The device of claim 18 further comprising a switch coupled to the caller and to the means for performing speaker independent and speaker dependent speech recognition.

20. A method of providing a telephone service in response to speech from a caller, the method comprising the steps of:

identifying the caller;

accessing a database including speaker dependent speech recognition templates of names;

performing speaker dependent speech recognition on the speech using the speaker dependent speech recognition templates to detect a name in the speech and a first time interval in which the name was spoken;

performing speech recognition on the speech in order to detect an explicit command in the speech and a second time interval in which the explicit command was spoken; and

upon detecting the name and the explicit command determining if the explicit command is of a type which requires a name to be performed and determining if there is a significant overlap between the first and second time intervals;

if it is determined that the command is of the type which requires a name to be performed and if the first and second time intervals significantly overlap, performing an arbitration step to determine whether to respond to the detected command or to dial a telephone number in response to the detected name.

21. The method of claim 20,

wherein the step of performing speech recognition in order to detect the presence of an explicit command includes the step of performing speaker independent speech recognition; and

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wherein the steps of performing speaker dependent speech recognition and speaker independent speech recognition are performed in parallel.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein upon detecting the presence of a name and failing to detect the presence of an

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explicit command in the speech a further step of dialing a telephone number, corresponding to the name whose presence was detected, is performed.

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